



A Global Vision: Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and the Puerto Rican Liberation Struggle, 1931-1992

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A GLOBAL VISION:
DR. ANA LIVIA CORDERO AND THE PUERTO RICAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE
1931-1992

A dissertation presented
by
Sandy Isabel Placido
to
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Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and the Puerto Rican Liberation Struggle, 1931-1992

Abstract

“A Global Vision: Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and the Puerto Rican Liberation Struggle, 1931-1992,” is the first, in-depth study of Ana Livia Cordero, a twentieth century Puerto Rican female physician and transnational anti-imperialist activist. Cordero dedicated her life to Puerto Rican liberation, and she forged ties with activists throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the United States. Cordero’s activism was guided by a global, but also Puerto Rican, perspective which insisted on the central role of racism and colonialism in the development of capitalism. Cordero expanded the geographic and demographic boundaries of each of the movements she participated in, and her story is a powerful example of the influential role of Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans, women, and medical professionals in Cold War-era freedom struggles.

Cordero worked to include Puerto Rico on the agendas of anticolonial conferences in Egypt, Ghana, and Cuba throughout the 1960s, she exposed Black Power leaders such as Julian Mayfield (her husband), James Foreman, and Stokely Carmichael to the anti-imperial nature of the Black struggle, and in 1967 she began the Proyecto Piloto de Trabajo con el Pueblo (Pilot Project of Work with the People), a political organizing initiative that worked with Puerto Rican communities marginalized by mainstream independence movements. Over a twenty-five-year period, Proyecto members combined Marxist, social science, and popular education methods to understand Puerto Rican reality and liberate themselves at an individual and collective level.

Even though Cordero forged ties with prominent contemporaries such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, Maya Angelou, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Juan Mari Bras, and

Julian Mayfield, she exists on the periphery of historiographies that cover Pan-Africanism, Black Power, Third World liberation and solidarity, and the Puerto Rican, Latin American, and U.S.-based left. This dissertation is a social biography that delves deeply into Cordero's life, context, and legacy, and is based on archival research with materials that have yet to be analyzed by other historians; interviews, conversations, and collaboration with individuals who knew Cordero in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Ghana; and observation and contemplation as a migrating female researcher with roots in the Hispanophone Caribbean.

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Introduction

The most important world-wide struggle today is between the colonial and ex-colonial segment of the world and the imperialist segment...This struggle must be waged primarily by the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.¹

-Dr. Ana Livia Cordero

We American Negroes can no longer lead the colored peoples of the world because they far better than we understand what is happening in the world today.²

-Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois

In the summer of 1964, the Puerto Rican activist Ana Livia Cordero typed a two-page letter addressed to Malcolm X. Cordero wrote from Accra, Ghana, where she was stationed as a medical doctor and public health researcher. After outlining the four levels of political consciousness that needed to be achieved in order to unite the Afro-American and Puerto Rican liberation struggles, Cordero concluded, “The most important world-wide struggle today is between the colonial and ex-colonial segment of the world and the imperialist segment...This struggle must be waged primarily by the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.”³ For Cordero, the fight against imperialism was a global priority that required the leadership of those who bore the brunt of this system—the colonized and formerly colonized peoples in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Cordero’s analysis resonates with the one offered by W.E.B. Du Bois seven years before, at a speech he delivered on April 30, 1957 in New York City at the

¹ Ana Livia Cordero to Malcolm X, August 25, 1964, box 14, folder 2, Malcolm X papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

² W.E.B. Du Bois, “The American Negro and the Darker World,” speech delivered April 30, 1957 in New York City on the occasion of the celebration of the second anniversary of the Asian-African (Bandung) conference and the rebirth of Ghana, published in the journal *Freedomways*, No. 3, 1968, reprinted in *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in Their Own Country*, edited by Esther Cooper Jackson, with Constance Pohl, (Westview Press, 2000), 118.

³ Ana Livia Cordero to Malcolm X, August 25, 1964, box 14, folder 2, Malcolm X papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

celebration of the second anniversary of the Bandung conference and the recent independence of Ghana. Du Bois declared, “We American Negroes can no longer lead the colored peoples of the world because they far better than we understand what is happening in the world today.”⁴ Du Bois challenged the leadership of “American Negroes” over the “colored peoples of the world,” and he claimed that the latter had a better comprehension of the way that oppression operated at a global scale. The wave of Third World liberation struggles and triumphs in the post-World War II period inspired Cordero and Du Bois as they advocated for a reorientation of the global struggle. These two activist-intellectuals came to the conclusion that the scope of solidarity and struggle had to be broadened. Cordero and Du Bois were friends from 1961 to 1963, when both lived in Ghana as political exiles from the United States. Their similar viewpoints likely allowed them to strengthen their relationship and learn from each other as they continued to refine their ideas about the way the world worked, and what needed to be done to ensure the maximum amount of freedom for the largest amount of people.

Along with Du Bois, Cordero should be widely recognized as an early example of an activist of color from the Americas during the Cold War who promoted an approach to political activism that was global, anti-colonial, and prioritized the leadership of Third World peoples. Cordero, a Puerto Rican female physician and activist, dedicated her life to Puerto Rican liberation, and she forged ties with leaders throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the United States. She was clear about situating the Black struggle in the United States within an anti-imperialist framework. She insisted that Puerto Ricans embrace their Black, mulato, and Caribbean identity and their link to other Blacks in the diaspora. And she highlighted the role of

⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois, “The American Negro and the Darker World,” speech delivered April 30, 1957 in New York City on the occasion of the celebration of the second anniversary of the Asian-African (Bandung) conference and the rebirth of Ghana, published in the journal *Freedomways*, No. 3, 1968, reprinted in *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in Their Own Country*, edited by Esther Cooper Jackson, with Constance Pohl, (Westview Press, 2000), 118.

Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the development of capitalism. Cordero especially emphasized Puerto Rico's role in a variety of liberation movements. Puerto Rico was not consistently on the agenda of African Americans, and not consistently on the agenda of anti-colonial movements. However, Cordero showed that instead of being erased because of its multiplicity, Puerto Rico simply had to be on both agendas. Thus, Cordero's anticolonial, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist perspective expanded the geographic and demographic boundaries of each of the movements in which she participated during her lifetime. Despite the scale and difficulty of her work, and the creativity that it required, Cordero's theorizations and contributions have been slow to reach the pages of historical narratives, and this dissertation is the first, extensive study of her life and legacy. *A Global Vision* argues that a consideration of Cordero's life—a life which was physically and ideologically transnational—provides a rich starting point for deeper reflection on the role of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans in twentieth century liberation struggles throughout the world.

A Global Woman's Social Biography: A Life and a Methodology

A Global Vision is a social biography that delves deeply into one person's life, context, and legacy. This was a theoretical as well as methodological choice. Social biographies that historically contextualize individual perspectives can get at nuanced experiences and conversations that, instead of being distracting, illuminate a broader picture.⁵ Academic scholarship which focuses on movements can lose sight of individuals like Cordero, who were

⁵ I want to keep in mind Edmund Burke III's description of Social Biography as I write: "Social Biography encourages us to see the connections between the profoundly local and individual on the one hand, and the global and world historical on the other hand. Its particular magic is to make the role of world historical processes in human lives historically visible." Edmund Burke III, "How to Write a Social Biography", accessible at <http://cwh.ucsc.edu/Writing.Social.Biogs.pdf>

singular and worked across times, places, and issues. Instead of obscuring the one-on-one relationships that constitute social movements, *A Global Vision* demonstrates the extent to which the construction of international solidarity during the Cold War depended on the intersecting lives of key individuals at key moments. This is the type of transnational historical scholarship that, as Robin Kelley writes, “follows people back and forth across the physical borders of the United States, a history in which the boundaries are determined not by geopolitics but by people and their movements—physical and mental, real and imagined.”⁶

Cordero’s global life began on July 4, 1931, when she was born in Puerto Rico, in a colonial context during the Great Depression. Puerto Rico was in dire economic straits, due to the worldwide economic depression, several destructive hurricanes, and the exploitative policies and practices that had begun under United States rule in 1898. Cordero’s parents, who taught at the University of Puerto Rico, were critical and unconventional, but they were also practical and committed to improving the well-being of Puerto Ricans. Cordero’s father was appointed to several government positions, serving under Rexford Tugwell, Jesús T. Piñero, and Luis Muñoz Marín, the first democratically elected governor of Puerto Rico under United States rule.⁷

Shortly after the end of World War II, as Cold War tensions and political repression grew, Cordero graduated from the University of Puerto Rico and migrated to New York to attend

⁶ Robin D. G. Kelley, “How the West Was One: The African Diaspora and the Re-Mapping of U.S. History,” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 139.

⁷ Tugwell was the last governor of Puerto Rico from the United States and Jesús T. Piñero was the only Puerto Rican governor to be appointed by the United States government. For more on Puerto Rican political and economic history in the post 1898 period, see César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); James Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development* (Princeton University Press, 1987); Arturo Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983). For more on Tugwell’s time as governor, see his book, *The Stricken Land* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1946). For more on the rise of Luis Muñoz Marín, see Eileen Suárez Findlay, *We are left without a father here: Masculinity, Domesticity, and Migration in Postwar Puerto Rico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. She became involved in the city's leftist and Puerto Rican organizing. Cordero graduated medical school in 1953, and it was while working at Sydenham Hospital in Harlem that she met Julian Mayfield, a radical African American writer, artist, and activist. In 1954, two years after a process that had transformed Puerto Rico into a commonwealth of the United States, Cordero and Mayfield traveled to the island, where they married and had their first son. They lived on the island until 1958, and during this time, they developed relationships with a diverse group of Cold War leftists, while Cordero conducted innovative public health research in rural areas.

A year and a half after the Cuban revolution sent shockwaves throughout the Caribbean and the world, Cordero and Mayfield traveled to Havana in July 1960 with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, where they met the black militant Robert Williams, head of the NAACP in Monroe, North Carolina. During the early 1960s, the black struggle in the United States was escalating, and Williams was involved in a racial conflict in Monroe in 1961 that forced him and his family to flee the country.⁸ Cordero and Mayfield assisted Williams' family as they escaped, and as a result, they had to leave the country as well. In 1961, while Cordero was eight months pregnant with their second child, Cordero, Mayfield, and their son arrived in Accra, Ghana. The country had just gained its independence in 1957, and President Kwame Nkrumah welcomed individuals from the African diaspora who could aid the nation in its development.⁹ Nkrumah hired Cordero as a researcher at the newly established National Institute of Health and Medical

⁸ For more on Cordero and Mayfield's role in the Robert Williams case, see Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006) and Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006).

⁹ See Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006).

Research, and she worked as a professor and as the director of a clinic for women and children as well. During the five years Cordero spent in Ghana, she also saved the life of Maya Angelou's son (he broke his neck but was initially misdiagnosed), she conducted volunteer medical work in rural settings, and she was W.E.B. Du Bois's doctor and friend in his final years.

Cordero brought Puerto Rico into the web of global, anti-imperial struggle. While based in Accra, Cordero was the Representative in Africa of the MPI, the *Movimiento Pro Independencia*, or pro-independence movement in Puerto Rico. During these years, Third World liberation movements such as Pan-Africanism grew in power.¹⁰ In the months leading up to the Second Conference of Non-Aligned Countries—and at the conference itself, which took place in Cairo in October 1964—Cordero organized and lobbied until the MPI was admitted as an observer at the gathering. This support from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was a major victory for the Puerto Rican liberation struggle, especially since Puerto Rico's conversion into a commonwealth in 1952 led to the nation being removed from the United Nations's list of colonized countries. Cordero garnered similar support for the Puerto Rican cause at the Afro-Asian Conference in Winneba, Ghana in 1965, and the Tricontinental conference in Cuba in 1966.

By the time Cordero returned to Puerto Rico in 1967, she was able to manifest her ideas about the practice and process of liberation as the founder and brains behind the Proyecto Piloto de Trabajo con el Pueblo (Pilot Project of Work with the People), an organization that worked with hundreds of people throughout the island until Cordero's death in 1992. The creation of the Proyecto Piloto represented a major break within the MPI. Several of the Proyecto's earliest

¹⁰ For more on Pan-Africanism in the post-World War II era, see Kwame Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle against World Imperialism* (London: Panaf, 1962) and *Class Struggle in Africa* (London: Panaf, 1970).

members had been leaders within the JMPI, the MPI's youth division. They left the organization run by Juan Mari Bras because they believed it was hierarchical, not focused on national liberation, and disconnected from Puerto Rico's most marginalized communities. As members of the Proyecto, these young people immersed themselves in working-class communities where their approach to consciousness-raising combined social science, the scientific method, Marxism, popular education, and the arts. The Proyecto faced extreme levels of surveillance, and after arrests, trials, and the bombing of the group's home base in Barrio Tortugo, members decided to continue the work at a clandestine level. In the final decade of her life, Cordero participated in Puerto Rico-based coalitions that worked to support the people of Haiti and Nicaragua.¹¹ Although she struggled with breathing complications, Cordero brought her strategic expertise to coalitions that were part of pan-American and intra-Latin American solidarity movements of the period.

Social Biography and Beloved Bodies: Methodological Notes

A Global Vision argues that it is historically productive to consider an individual and their body “as *both* a locus of experience *and* an object of analysis.”¹² In other words, I consider Cordero's body—its physical manifestation and transformation—in order to analyze what I

¹¹ For more on Nicaragua during the years Cordero and the Proyecto worked there, see Edmund Gordon, *Disparate diasporas: Identity and Politics in an African Nicaraguan Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); for more on the political crises that led to Haitian emigration in the 1980s see David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996) and Amy Wilentz, *The Rainy Season: Haiti since Duvalier* (London: Vintage, 1994 [1989]).

¹² In their edited volume, *Latina Legacies*, Vicki Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol write, “To varying degree, each biographer focuses on the politics and poetics of identity formation, locating the body, in the words of anthropologist Rebecca J. Lester, ‘as *both* a locus of experience *and* an object of analysis.’” Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds., *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 5.

know (and imagine what I do not know) about Cordero's experience. For example, although I do not have extensive primary source evidence about her time as a medical student and doctor in New York City in the early 1950s, I contextualize what it would have meant to be a relatively short, at five feet, four inches, light skinned woman with a Spanish language accent studying medicine at the elite Columbia University alongside white men from the United States, and then traveling to her apartment in Harlem, where she would have lived amongst working class Puerto Ricans and African Americans. In addition to her body's physical characteristics (including constructed ones such as gender) and the spaces she occupied, I also consider the actual movements and transformations of Cordero's body. I take seriously that she became the University of Puerto Rico's prima ballerina. I analyze photographs of Cordero *en pointe* and holding a pose while lifted in the air, considering how her time as a dancer was one of the ways in which she expressed her bodily strength and discipline. She also expressed a notable amount of bodily strength and discipline when she traveled to Ghana in 1961 while eight months pregnant, and survived a difficult delivery; when, under constant police surveillance, she raised two boys in Puerto Rico on her own while developing a grassroots organization with dozens of members; and when she continued to write, mentor, organize, and bring the physical presence of her body to movement spaces such as marches and meetings, even though she spent the last ten years of her life struggling to breathe because of a pulmonary disease.

With Cordero's physicality, movements, and locations in mind, I consider how the site of her body is a valuable locus of experience.¹³ For instance, even though she had lived and worked

¹³ The scholar Omaris Zunilda Zamora has written on the archives of knowledge contained within Afro-Latina bodies. See Omaris Zunilda Zamora, "(Trance)forming AfroLatina Embodied Knowledges in Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints*" in *Label Me Latina/o* Special Issue: Afro-Latina/o Literature and Performance, Summer 2017 Volume VII, and Omaris Zunilda Zamora, "Let the waters flow: (trans)locating Afro-Latina feminist thought." MA Thesis, Austin: University of Texas, 2013.

in Ghana for five years, fellow activists in Puerto Rico critiqued Cordero for being a light-skinned woman who wore African print clothing.¹⁴ Nonetheless, Cordero, a white-presenting woman, promoted African heritage and Afro-diasporic solidarity on an island where thousands of enslaved Africans arrived during the slave trade. The field of performance studies provides theoretical frameworks for thinking about Cordero's body as a locus of experience. Building off the work of Robin Bernstein, which considers the ways that material culture provokes specific "scripts" of human behavior, I explore how Cordero's performances—her physical manifestations and expressions—shaped her interactions with others.¹⁵

Cordero's body and its performances placed her at the intersection of various continents and movements.¹⁶ Cordero was what Robin Kelley would call a "diasporan subject:" a "transnational subject" whose "thoughts, desires, allegiances, and even...bodies are between and betwixt nations."¹⁷ Cordero's performances as a Puerto Rican, woman, and doctor broadened the contours of the spaces and movements she was a part of. Cordero's work in the medical profession did not make her a typical activist within the Puerto Rican Independence movement or in transnational African American movements. As a woman, she stood out due to her active

¹⁴ "Rubén Sánchez inferred that the MPI male leadership's discomfort and annoyance with Cordero stemmed in part from her style of dress. According to Sánchez, members of the MPI disparaged Cordero in hushed whispers asking, 'What is that white woman doing dressed as an African or Black woman?'" In Carlos Alamo-Pastrana's, *Seams of Empire: Race and Radicalism in Puerto Rico and the United States* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016), 144.

¹⁵ Robin Bernstein, "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race," in *Social Text*, 27(4), 2009, 68-69.

¹⁶ For more on the work done by the body via performance, see the work of Omaris Zamora. Also, J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (1975); Nicole Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (2011); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1971); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003); E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (2003); Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999); Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory and the Black Body* (2010).

¹⁷ Kelley, "How the West Was One," 125.

role in the male-heavy Puerto Rican independence and African American liberation movements. And as a Puerto Rican, she enhances our understanding of the role played by people from Latin America and the Caribbean in social movements in places such as Harlem and Ghana.¹⁸

Cordero's story contributes to conversations within Afro-Latinx scholarship about how to accurately describe diverse, Afro-diasporic communities without downplaying colorism, privilege, and the additional oppression faced by darker-skinned people in the American and Caribbean diasporas.¹⁹ Although Cordero was white-presenting, she was also the mother of dark-skinned children, and had been married to a dark skinned person, and she knew that the people who were brought from Africa to the Americas during the slave trade, as well as their descendants, were an integral part of Puerto Rican society. These individuals left subtle and not-so-subtle traces on Puerto Rican bodies, places, and cultural products. *A Global Vision* discusses Cordero's multiple efforts—including linguistic ones—to expand boundaries of belonging.

Despite the nuanced information that is revealed when examining one person's life, historians have tended to resist the biographical form. As Nick Salvatore explains, one of the critiques historians have with biographies is that "the birth and death of the subject defined the parameters of the book...regardless of sweeping transformations in society and culture that predated (and outlasted) the individual in question."²⁰ Interestingly, Cordero's life was bookmarked by the global economic depression and the official end of the Cold War, two major markers found within historical narratives of the twentieth century. As such, Cordero's life as a

¹⁸ See Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998).

¹⁹ *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, Eds. (Duke University Press, 2010).

²⁰ Nick Salvatore, "Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship," in *Labour History*, No. 87 (November, 2004), 187.

globally-minded liberation activist dovetails well with the broader context, a time during which people at all levels of society were thinking about transforming statuses and alliances in a world where power was shifting rapidly. However, even if Cordero's life was not circumscribed by such important, global events, I would still advocate using her life as the narrative thread of this dissertation because, as Salvatore writes, "the test, then, for biography is not whether the subject is representative, whatever that may mean, but rather what is it that we might learn from a study of a specific life."²¹ As I have described, tracing Cordero's travels, relationships, and actions while acknowledging her embodiment, that is, following her into various "dimensions of...her life"²² allows for an understanding of the "broader forces that structure the society and culture every individual inhabits"²³ and "can serve as a useful vehicle to explore deeper social tendencies." I call it a social biography, in particular, because of the way "a broader social history entwines with a more private pattern."²⁴

There is another important reason that *A Global Vision* is a social biography. As a woman of color who is the daughter of working-class migrants from the Dominican Republic, I live with racist, capitalist, and colonial realities and legacies on a daily basis. Given the detrimental effects of this oppression on myself and my loved ones, I pursue justice urgently. As an intellectual, an essential part of my praxis is to highlight the stories of women who I consider my role models, and who I believe can serve as role models for others who are strategizing for liberation. Alice

²¹ Salvatore, "Biography and Social History," 190.

²² Salvatore, "Biography and Social History," 191.

²³ Salvatore, "Biography and Social History," 188.

²⁴ Salvatore, "Biography and Social History," 190. Also see Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (June, 2001), pp. 129-144.

Walker wrote about the importance of creating narratives that provide models for people who do not often find themselves represented:

It has been said that someone asked Toni Morrison why she writes the kind of books she writes, and that she replied: Because they are the kind of books I want to read...To take Toni Morrison's statement further, if that is possible, in my own work I write not only what I want to read...I write all the things *I should have been able to read*.²⁵

I study liberation as part of my quest to achieve actual liberation—as in stability, peace, and healing, with the adequate resources—for myself and others. Walker explained that “models in art, in behavior, in growth of spirit and intellect...enrich and enlarge one's view of existence.”²⁶ Models expand the realm of what's possible and permissible, revealing genealogies, strategies, warnings, and hope. For the oppressed, uplifting the stories of the people who struggled before us is a way to trace our own continuity and power in the face of destruction and marginalization. Walker commented on the immense stakes of the narrative work: “It is, in the end, the saving of lives that we writers are about...We care because we know this: *the life we save is our own*.”²⁷

In oppressed communities, social biographies already exist as a common way of orally transmitting historical information. As people who have been denied their history in school, books, and other media, collective history is derived from the stories of individuals, extrapolated from the stories that family and community members tell about their individual lives. In Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*, the family's collective history is passed down orally by women, and throughout the novel, these women remind us that these stories must be told over and over again because the evidence has been destroyed.²⁸ In my case, my earliest lessons in Caribbean history

²⁵ Alice Walker, “Saving the Life that is Your Own: The Importance of Models in the Artist's Life,” in *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1983), 7 and 13.

²⁶ Walker, “Saving the Life that is Your Own,” 4.

²⁷ Walker, “Saving the Life that is Your Own,” 14.

²⁸ Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (Boston: Beacon Press [1975] 1986).

came from my father's narration of his teenage years. I learned about the 1965 civil war and United States invasion of the Dominican Republic when I asked my father why he had not gone to college. The events of 1965 led to the closure of the university, and his plans to study engineering were dashed. Since his own father had passed away, he chose to migrate to the United States instead, so that he could support his mother and younger brothers with the money he made working at a gas station and as a cab driver. Although the context influenced my father's options, my entry point into this era of Dominican history was my interest in his personal experiences. Later, the tables turned. As I began to specialize in Caribbean history, it became important for me to check the broad stories I received against the knowledge of my father and others. Because of the way that the history of the oppressed has been excluded and distorted, my historical method is dialectic—I rely not only on recorded primary and secondary sources, but on the stories that living people are able to share with me. Given that oppressed people have a tradition of passing down history in such intimate and humanizing ways—via stories from or about beloved bodies—biographies should be recognized as a legitimate and illuminating form within the historical profession. Walker also describes the spiritual dimensions of highlighting the overlooked stories of our ancestors:

I had that wonderful feeling writers get sometimes, not very often, of being *with* a great many people, ancient spirits, all very happy to see me consulting and acknowledging them, and eager to let me know, through the joy of their presence, that, indeed, I am not alone.²⁹

For some of us, biographies are empowering, familiar, and one of the best (and sometimes, one of the only) ways to reveal the complexity and nuance present within our communities that hegemonic narratives continue to ignore.

²⁹ Walker, "Saving the Life that is Your Own," 13.

In terms of my method, oral histories and relationships with the people who knew Cordero are important parts of my research process. As Vicki Ruiz wrote, “Furthermore, inflections of memory (despite its many frailties) may be central to crafting more satisfying constructs of agency and voice.”³⁰ At times, the people I spoke to admitted not remembering the past clearly, and I sometimes found myself correcting them or providing information to fill in gaps in their knowledge. However, the conversations I have had with people who knew Cordero have allowed me to better understand her personality as well as the powerful impact she had on the many people who still love and admire her. I also find it important to engage seriously with cultural products of the time, such as the art produced by the Proyecto and the novels written by Mayfield. Ruiz also commented on the use of cultural products as historical sources: “Memories crystallized in literature and visual art speak eloquently to historical experience.”³¹ In addition, I found it essential to visit the places where Cordero spent her time, including Ghana, Puerto Rico, and New York. Although I visited years after the events I am writing about, I use my time in these spaces, as a migrating Afro-Latinx woman, to think about what it would have meant for Cordero to be in these spaces as well.

Archival Development

There are logistical challenges to writing about individuals whose broader communities have been overlooked or misrepresented. In addition, Cordero’s travels and her participation in a variety of places and movements means that she weaves in and out of archives. When I began my research on Cordero, I realized that an easily accessible and organized archive with materials

³⁰ Ruiz and Sánchez Korrol, *Latina Legacies*, 4.

³¹ Ruiz and Sánchez Korrol, *Latina Legacies*, 4.

related to her life did not exist. I found a few primary and secondary sources that included no more than a sentence or two about her. However, given my historical interests, I am used to scouring footnotes and indexes. I follow my intuition and use imagination when engaging with even the smallest of traces, because I know that the historical documentation of a person's life is not proportional to the impact they had in the world.³² As Alexandra Vazquez encourages us to do, I listened in detail: "Listening in detail ignores those accusations of going too far, of giving too much time to a recording of seemingly little significance."³³ Thus, I identified with Walker's story of finding out about Zora Neale Hurston from a footnote: "And that is when I first saw, in a *footnote* to the white voices of authority, the name Zora Neale Hurston."³⁴ I found out about Cordero because I was looking for a historical example in Malcolm X's archive that could inspire the political organizing I was doing in New York City to unite African American and Latinx communities. I realized that this woman had helped to "prepar[e] the ground over which I was moving."³⁵ Cordero wrote, said, taught, and did work that addressed the major challenges of her time, and are still relevant today.

When I first met Rafael, Cordero's son, in the summer of 2012, it was crammed in boxes and bags in his apartment in Michigan (I would later acquire more primary sources in the homes of people in Puerto Rico and the United States). I facilitated the connection between Rafael and

³² See Mérida Rúa, "Footnotes of Social Justice: Elena Padilla and Chicago Puerto Rican Communities," in *Latino Urban Ethnography and the Work of Elena Padilla* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010). Doris Sommer's work on minority literatures is also useful here, in terms of the importance of close reading and attention to detail. See Doris Sommer, *Proceed with Caution, when engaged by minority writing in the America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

³³ Alexandra T. Vazquez, *Listening in Detail: Performances of Cuban Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 4.

³⁴ Walker, "Saving the Life that is Your Own," 11.

³⁵ Walker, "Saving the Life that is Your Own," 13.

Professor Nancy Cott at Harvard's Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. After traveling to Michigan with Jennifer Gotwals, a head archivist, to survey the collection in the spring of 2013, and traveling back at various points to work with Rafael as he initially organized the papers, the collection arrived at Harvard in the summer of 2014, and opened to the public in early 2016. Gotwals consulted with Rafael and me as she organized the collection and created the finding aid.

Looking back, I realize that my ability to speak Spanish, as well as my familiarity with several of the cultures and communities that Cordero inhabited helped me access information. After much persistence, I began meeting Cordero's comrades and members of her family. Those closest to Cordero questioned my politics very early on, and after learning about my experiences as a woman of color and an activist, we were able to establish relationships of trust that eased their anxiety, given the decades of repression they had faced. Once I had access to individuals as well as thousands of pages worth of primary sources, I realized that another prerequisite to writing about Cordero is fluency in English as well as Spanish. Obtaining information about Cordero has required the level of determination, creativity, sensitivity, physical exertion, political commitment, and interpersonal skills that are more commonly associated with anthropological research, or studies on people and topics underrepresented in historiographies.

The fact that there is not yet a full-length biography of Cordero may be a partial result of the fact that her papers have not previously been accessible. But there are other explanations for the dearth of scholarship focused on her. Cordero lived in multiple, patriarchal societies. Many sources refer to her primarily as Julian Mayfield's wife. Personally, Cordero did not enjoy receiving excessive praise and recognition for her activism. Her partner for many years, Samuel Aviles, once wrote a letter praising Cordero's mother, and added a note that he was careful not to

directly praise Cordero in the letter as well, because she would become extremely embarrassed. In Puerto Rico, Cordero's break with the MPI, the mainstream independence movement on the island, in 1967 tarnished her reputation, as did misconceptions about the grassroots organizing methods of the Proyecto. A 1968 article in the *San Juan Star* also provides some clues as to how perceptions about Cordero influenced a collective memory of her:

In Puerto Rico her fame is spreading: She is called a "brilliant woman" by her admirers, stubborn by some fellow independentistas, a Communist and bombthrower by some members of the middle class, an unprintable language by some policemen...The woman has courage, she has conviction, determination and organizational ability. However, she is not a popular leader in the sense of having an easy manner with people. She is not the Luis Muñoz Marín...she's more cerebral than personal.³⁶

The many interviews I have done with people who knew Cordero support the description of her as brilliant, stubborn, courageous, determined, organized, and cerebral. Being a woman in Puerto Rico, and in the world, with such personal characteristics during the time period that she lived probably made her difficult to understand, and for some, perhaps it was easier to ignore a woman who challenged so many established systems in such powerful ways.

Puerto Rico, the Cold War, Decolonization, and Black Internationalism

Despite her accomplishments, Cordero is at best peripheral in the historiographies that cover Puerto Rico and its diaspora under United States rule, the Global Cold War, Third World decolonization and solidarity movements, Afro-Latinidad, and Global Race Women. Cordero's story has been there all along, but it was not pursued and narrated—perhaps because those who did come across brief references to her did not have the same urgency or personal interest to find out more about who this woman was. References to her tend to be brief, mentioning her

³⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "People with Purpose: Revolution," *San Juan Star*, 1968. MC 824, folder 1.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

profession, her beauty, and the fact that she was Julian Mayfield's wife. In the biography of Shirley Graham Du Bois, Cordero is described as a "very able Puerto Rican woman doctor who was head of an important clinic."³⁷ In his autobiography, Malcolm X remembered "Julian Mayfield's pretty Puerto Rican wife, Ana Livia (she was in charge of Accra's district health program)."³⁸ Maya Angelou recounted that Cordero was "a small dark-eyed beautiful Puerto Rican medical doctor, who was as opinionated as a runaway train on a downhill slope."³⁹ In David Levering Lewis's biography of W.E.B. Du Bois, she is described as "an exceptionally beautiful Puerto Rican physician" who tended to Du Bois's medical needs and became his confidante during his final days in Ghana.⁴⁰ In secondary sources, mentions of Cordero are also brief. In Peniel Joseph's history of Black Power, he mentions her twice, to note that he is Mayfield's wife, although he does include the detail that Mayfield and Cordero served as interpreters for African Americans who were visiting Cuba in 1960 as part of the Fair Play for Cuba delegation.⁴¹ Dayo Gore briefly mentions Cordero when describing the expatriate community in Ghana in the early 1960s, and their engagement with Malcolm X.⁴² Kevin Gaines's work on expatriates in Ghana during the Nkrumah era does mention Cordero a fair amount, although also succinctly. Gaines includes information about her relationship with

³⁷ Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 204.

³⁸ Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 360.

³⁹ Maya Angelou, *The Heart of a Woman*, (Random House, Inc., [1981] 2009), 322.

⁴⁰ David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The fight for equality and the American century, 1919-1963*, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001), 568.

⁴¹ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006), 30 and 104.

⁴² Dayo Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York University Press, 2011), 146 and 148.

Mayfield, her involvement in the Robert Williams case, her political and medical work in Ghana, as well as her deportation from Ghana.⁴³

One notable exception to these brief references is the recently published work of Carlos Alamo-Pastrana. *Seams of Empire: Race and Radicalism in Puerto Rico* examines various moments within Puerto Rican history in which transnational ideas about race impacted political movements on the island.⁴⁴ Alamo's book contains an excellent chapter on the early years of the Proyecto, focusing primarily on the 1960s. He discusses Cordero's break with the MPI following her return from Ghana, and the work that the Proyecto did to reach out to populations that were being ignored by existing independence movements. Alamo learned about Cordero shortly after I did, after a colleague mentioned to him that Julian Mayfield's wife was Puerto Rican. We have been in conversation for about five years as we have worked to make sense of items in Cordero's archive. Because of the relationship I developed with Cordero's oldest son, as well as other members of her family and the Proyecto, I have engaged with a larger number of primary sources, and my work delves more deeply into Cordero's entire life as well as her legacy.

Cordero's story adds to historiographies that cover the diverse and deeply rooted strains of struggle in Puerto Rico. Cordero advocated for Puerto Rican independence, and denounced United States imperialism during a period of intense repression both on the island and in the world. Miñi Seijo Bruno's book, *La Insurrección Nacionalista en Puerto Rico 1950* provides evidence that demonstrates the wide-ranging support that militant nationalist movements had throughout the 1930s and 1940s, especially following United States-supported massacres of

⁴³ Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006).

⁴⁴ Carlos Alamo-Pastrana, *Seams of Empire: Race and Radicalism in Puerto Rico and the United States* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016).

nationalists such as the one in Ponce in 1937, and the incarceration of nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos in the United States.⁴⁵ Although Cordero herself was not a militant nationalist of the variety that would have been in Albizu Campos's organization, she was verbally denouncing imperialism in similar ways. Seijo Bruno's book shows the type of repression that Puerto Rican militants faced following the passage of the Gag Law in 1948, repression which manifested itself clearly during nationalist uprisings that took place throughout the island in 1950. Cordero's strategies during the 1940s and 1950s as an activist in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora contribute to a greater understanding of the ways that people with anti-imperialist beliefs, such as Cordero, found ways to continue organizing for liberation despite violent repression.

There is provocative scholarship that considers Puerto Rico's history and status from a more theoretical perspective.⁴⁶ Scholars such as Frances Negrón-Muntaner, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Jorge Duany have challenged interpretations of Puerto Rican history that are based on a simple dichotomy that pits colonialism against nationalism. In other words, these scholars are involved in conversations about Puerto Rican political behaviors and beliefs that are not easily categorized as being either for or against the colonial relationship with the United States (a relationship which in and of itself differs from other colonial relationships). These scholars point to historical moments when Puerto Ricans have worked within colonial structures to achieve rights, or have staunchly defended Puerto Rican identity while rejecting independence from the United States. Cordero's political trajectory also complicates easy dichotomies. Cordero began

⁴⁵ Miñi Seijo Bruno, *La Insurrección Nacionalista en Puerto Rico 1950* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial Edil [1985] 1997).

⁴⁶ Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel, eds., *Puerto Rican Jam: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Frances Negrón-Muntaner, ed., *None of the Above: Puerto Ricans in the Global Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

her career as a physician and public health advocate, a state worker accountable to populations in both Puerto Rico and the United States. Then, as a prominent member of the Puerto Rican pro-independence movement, she turned to international activism where she pushed for Puerto Rican independence from the United States. Towards the end of her life, Cordero focused more on the importance of internal decolonization for Puerto Ricans, and continued to move beyond nationalist ideas by creating physical and ideological links between the Puerto Rican struggle for liberation and struggles in places such as Nicaragua, Haiti, and the United States.

Various scholars, including many Puerto Ricans, have written about the history of Puerto Rico under United States imperialism.⁴⁷ These studies have taken the form of works of political economy, as well as social and cultural histories.⁴⁸ The Proyecto, given its work conducting

⁴⁷ César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Pedro Cabán, *Constructing A Colonial People: Puerto Rico And The United States, 1898-1932* (Westview Press, 2001); Arturo Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983); James Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development* (Princeton University Press, 1987); Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *We are Left without a Father Here: Masculinity, Domesticity, and Migration in Postwar Puerto Rico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Isar Godreau, *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico* (University of Illinois Press, 2015); Ramón Grosfoguel, *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2003); Suset Laboy-Perez, "Minor Problems: Juvenile Delinquents and the Construction of a Puerto Rican Subject, from 1880-1938" (PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2014); Hilda Lloréns, *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family: Framing Nation, Race, and Gender During the American Century* (Lexington Books, 2014); Pedro Malavet, *America's Colony: The Political and Cultural Conflict between the United States and Puerto Rico* (New York University Press, 2007); April Merleaux, *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Solsiree del Moral, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013); Juan Angel Silén, *We, the Puerto Rican People: A Story of Oppression and Resistance* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971); Juan Angel Silén, *Historia de la nación puertorriqueña* (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Editorial Edil, 1973); Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in Twentieth-Century New York City* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010); Kelvin Santiago Valles "Subject People" and *Colonial Discourses: Economic Transformation and Social Disorder in Puerto Rico: 1898-1947* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994); Ellen Walsh, "Called to the Field: Missionaries and Americanization in Puerto Rico, 1898-1930," (PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2008).

⁴⁸ Gervasio L. García and A.G. Quintero Rivera, *Desafío y solidaridad: Breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño* (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1982); Isar P. Godreau, *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, *El entierro de Cortijo* (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1983); Fernando Picó, *Vivir*

community surveys and producing community histories, contributes to these efforts to document the changing landscape in Puerto Rico following the United States takeover in 1898. Cordero's story also adds to the rich scholarship on Puerto Rican life under United States imperialism. This work covers various topics, such as the role of radical female activists such as Luisa Capetillo.⁴⁹

Cordero's life also enhances Puerto Rican Studies historiographies that narrate the political, cultural, social, and economic implications of Puerto Rican migration. Cordero's years in New York City add to primary source narratives such as the ones by Jesus Colón and Bernardo Vega, who were Puerto Rican activists who migrated to New York City in the early twentieth century and reflected on their transnational contexts within their writing.⁵⁰ Elena Padilla was a Puerto Rican anthropologist who also described New York City during the 1950s, when Cordero lived there as a medical student.⁵¹ Scholars have engaged with these primary sources in order to flesh out the experiences of Puerto Ricans in various locations in the United States, including New York, but also Chicago and Philadelphia.⁵²

en Caimito (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1988); and A.G. Quintero Rivera, *Conflictos de clase y política en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1977).

⁴⁹ *Amor y anarquía: Los escritos de Luisa Capetillo*, edición de Julio Ramos (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1992); Felix V. Matos Rodríguez, ed., *A Nation of Women: An Early Feminist Speaks Out / Mi opinión sobre las libertades, derechos y deberes de la mujer* by Luisa Capetillo (Arte Público Press, 2004).

⁵⁰ Jesus Colón, *A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches* (Masses and Mainstream, 1961); *Memorias de Bernardo Vega (contribución a la historia de la comunidad puertorriqueña en Nueva York)*, editadas por César Andreu Iglesias (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1977).

⁵¹ Elena Padilla, *Up from Puerto Rico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

⁵² Juan Flores, *Puerto Rican arrival in New York: Narratives of the migration, 1920-1950* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2005); Ruth Glasser, *My Music is my Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and their New York Communities, 1917-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Virginia Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Sonia Song-Ha Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement: Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in New York City* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Raquel Z. Rivera, *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Mérida Rúa, *A Grounded Identity: Making New Lives in Chicago's Puerto Rican Neighborhoods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Andrés Torres, *Between Melting Pot and Mosaic: African Americans and Puerto*

One of the overarching, historical contexts for Cordero's life was the Cold War. The Cold War, which took place within the bounds of Cordero's life, was the twentieth century power struggle between the capitalist (Western Bloc) and communist (Eastern Bloc) segments of the world, with one of the more recognizable conflicts being the one between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States dedicated substantial resources to combating and containing communism around the world, and especially within its vicinity. During the Cold War, the United States invaded several Caribbean and Latin American countries, toppling governments that they viewed as too communist or leftist, and supporting leaders with an interest in capitalist development who helped the United States maintain its sphere of influence.⁵³

For decades, most scholarship on the Cold War focused on diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. More recently, scholars have turned to the global politics of the conflict. Historians have shown that competition for the allegiance of recently independent nations was crucial for both the United States and the Soviet Union. Likewise, they have demonstrated that decolonized nations strategically navigated Cold War tensions to gain access to resources and make their own alliances.⁵⁴ These alliances included the Bandung Conference, the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Ricans in the New York Political Economy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Carmen Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Ana Y. Ramos Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁵³ Guatemala in 1954, Dominican Republic in 1965, Operation Condor in South America throughout the 1970s, Grenada in 1983. See Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006).

⁵⁴ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1988); Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The Cuban Revolution accelerated conversations within the Afro-Asian coalition about how to more fully include the Caribbean and Latin America in the Non-Aligned Movement. At the NAM's first conference in 1961, Cuba was the only country from Latin America whose delegates were recognized as representatives (although Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador were observers).⁵⁵ Thus, Cordero's efforts to ensure that Puerto Rico was included at the 1964 NAM conference enhances Cold War historiographies that explain the formation of Tricontinental solidarity. Cordero's work on behalf of the Puerto Rican liberation struggle contrasts with the measures taken by Cuban leaders. Castro and Che Guevara were investing a significant amount of time and resources into building with Afro-Asian nations, and by the end of 1960, Castro had firmly affiliated himself and his government with the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ Cordero and other Puerto Ricans maintained the more neutral stance of the Non-Aligned Movement. Given their focus on achieving self-determination, Puerto Rican activists such as Cordero show that Caribbean and Latin American activists played diverse roles in Third World solidarity building in the twentieth century.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ "Conferences of Nonaligned Countries," in *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition* (1970-1979). Accessed at <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Conferences+of+Nonaligned+Countries>

⁵⁶ Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa*, 105.

⁵⁷ For more on this Third World, Tricontinental solidarity building, see Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger, 1984); Samantha Christiansen and Zachary Scarlett, eds. *The Third World in the Global 1960s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993); Van Gosse, *The Movements of the New Left, 1950-1975: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004); Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007); Besenia Rodriguez, "De la Esclavitud Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana: U.S. Black Radicals, the Cuban Revolution, and the Formation of a Tricontinental Ideology," in *Radical History Review*, (Issue 92: Spring 2005), 62-87; Nico Slate, *Black Power beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Scholars of black internationalism have shown that the African American struggle was connected to Third World movements at fundamental levels.⁵⁸ Like many of the African Americans who made connections between their struggle and the struggle of others around the world, Cordero recognized the ways in which African Americans and Puerto Ricans were subject to racism, capitalism, and colonialism, an interrelated set of forces.⁵⁹ Cordero and other Puerto Rican activists were a part of a movement of leftist people of color around the world with an intersectional approach that was global and anti-capitalist without ignoring the importance of race, gender, and culture.⁶⁰ Historians have shown how people of color worked around or

⁵⁸ See Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Azza Salama Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941-1960* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ The Black Power movement in particular understood these connections. See James Boggs, "Black Power: A Scientific Concept," in *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages from a Black Worker's Notebook*, ed. James Boggs (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas eds., *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting until the midnight hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006); Peniel E. Joseph, ed. *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); William W. Sales, Jr., *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Fanon Che Wilkins, "'In the belly of the beast': Black Power, Anti-Imperialism, and the African Liberation Solidarity Movement, 1968-1975" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001); Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁶⁰ See Imamu Amiri Baraka and William J. Harris, *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* (Basic Books, 2000); Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Francois Maspero, 1959); Johanna Fernández, *Radicals in the late 1960s: A History of the Young Lords Party in New York City, 1969-1974* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2004); Obika Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica, 1960-1972* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Natasha Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom: Antigua and the Aftermath of British Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Brian Meeks, *Caribbean Revolutions and Revolutionary Theory: An Assessment of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada* (London: Macmillan, 1993); Brian Meeks, *Radical Caribbean: From Black Power to Abu Bakr* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1996); Kate Quinn, *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013); Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1965); Mary Helen

became disillusioned with various strains of the Communist Party because of their inability to acknowledge such intersectional realities.⁶¹

A Global Vision builds on scholarship that uses an intersectional approach to Third World leftist organizing. A growing number of scholars are investigating the under-appreciated efforts of women of color in this organizing, and the scholar Imaobong Umoren has described these transnational, female activists as “global race women.”⁶² Much of this scholarship takes the form of social biographies, supporting the argument that a biography is a powerful genre in cases where historical contexts need to be reframed to account for the participation of oppressed groups.⁶³ *A Global Vision* also contributes to scholarship that tells the story of grassroots, arts-

Washington, *The Other Blacklist: The African American Literary and Cultural Left of the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁶¹ Although scholars such as Robin Kelley and Glenda Gilmore have shown that the communist party attracted people of color in the 1930s, other scholars have detailed growing disillusionment with the party, some of which had to do with Russian racism. See B. D. Amis, *African American Radical: A Short Anthology of Writings and Speeches* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2007); Katherine Anne Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark, Del: University of Delaware Press, 1994); Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008); Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

⁶² See Keisha Blain, “For the freedom of the race”: *Black women and the practices of nationalism, 1929-1945* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2014); Ashley Farmer, “Mothers of the Movement: Audley Moore and Dara Abubakari.” Special Issue: Women, Gender, and Pan Africanism, *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 4: 2 (Fall 2016): 274–295; Dayo Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York University Press, 2011); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Imaobong Umoren, “Anti-Fascism and the Development of Global Race Women, 1928-1945” in *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*. Vol. 39, Issue 1, 2016, pp. 151-237.

⁶³ Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Ulises Estrada, *Tania: Undercover with Che Guevara in Bolivia* (New York: Ocean Press, 2005); Licia Fiol-Matta, *A Queer Mother for the Nation: The State and Gabriela Mistral* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Diane C. Fujino, *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign against Lynching* (New York: Amistad, 2008); Dayo Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York University Press,

based, and cultural organizing within the leftist communities of color,⁶⁴ of Afro-Latinx participation in these movements,⁶⁵ and the role of doctors and other professionals in postcolonial development.⁶⁶

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation spans five chapters. Throughout, Cordero's evolution as an activist-intellectual is situated alongside the societal transformations occurring within Puerto Rico, and across the world. The first chapter, "The Domestic is International: Coming of Age from the Great Depression to the Commonwealth" explains the contexts for Cordero's international and

2009); Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2002); Lisa Mullins, *Diane Nash: The Fire of the Civil Rights Movement: A Biography* (Miami, FL: Barnhardt & Ashe Pub., 2007); Sherie Randolph, *Florynce "Flo" Kennedy: The Life of a Black Feminist Radical* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (Yale University Press, 2013); Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds., *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Doctor Mom Chung of the Fair-Haired Bastards: The Life of a Wartime Celebrity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁶⁴ Robyn Spencer, *The Revolution has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, 1999); Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁶⁵ Devyn Spence Benson, *Antiracism in Cuba: The Unfinished Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Frank Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, eds. *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* (Duke University Press, 2010).

⁶⁶ "It is no accident that some of the world's most radical activists—Che Guevara, Rebecca Gomperts, Salvatore Allende, Frantz Fanon, and Ana Livia Cordero—were also physicians. Calling for the medical curriculum to heal itself may mean calling as well to heal society," Anne Fausto-Sterling, "I Can't Breathe: Race in Medical School Curricula" in the Boston Review, <http://bostonreview.net/wonders/anne-fausto-sterling-race-medical-school>, March 21, 2016, accessed August 4, 2017. Other important radical physicians of color include Helen Rodríguez Trias, Ramón Emeterio Betances, Evangelina González, and Steve Biko. Also see John Dittmer, *The Good Doctors: The Medical Committee for Human Rights and the Struggle for Social Justice in Health Care* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010) and Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006).

intersectional outlook. Cordero's parents had positions in government and at the university, meaning that Cordero listened as the island's political and intellectual leaders debated and planned Puerto Rico's evolving status within a changing global context. Cordero was also a part of this nation-building effort, working for the Puerto Rican Department of Health in the mid-1950s, and conducting pioneering research on rural health care. This chapter demonstrates how Cordero's upbringing as well as her training and work as a physician in Puerto Rico and New York City exposed her to the relationship between racism and imperialism, and how her politics increasingly diverged from the politics of her parents.

The second chapter, "Havana to Accra and beyond: Cordero promoting Puerto Rican liberation internationally, 1954-1966," discusses the various ways that Cordero promoted Puerto Rican liberation beyond the island and with non-Puerto Ricans. The chapter begins with an analysis of the way that Cordero shaped the anti-imperialist outlook of her husband, Julian Mayfield, moves to how Cordero promoted Puerto Rican independence in Cuba, Ghana, and Egypt, and ends with Cordero's deportation from Ghana following the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah. The chapter also emphasizes Cordero's contributions to Ghana's emerging medical research and education programs, demonstrating the way that she applied public health expertise she had developed in Puerto Rico to the Ghanaian context. Cordero expressed her anti-imperial vision in the various spaces that she inhabited during this time, and she was pivotal in helping people and movements recognize Puerto Rico's place in the global liberation struggle.

"The Proyecto Piloto: A New Direction for the Puerto Rican Left" is the third chapter. It details Cordero's creation of the Proyecto Piloto de Trabajo con el Pueblo (Pilot Project of Work with the People), illustrating how the founding of this organization was part of a shift in strategy for disillusioned members of the Puerto Rican left. The Proyecto was an organizing and political

education group that worked at the grassroots level to empower politically under-engaged communities, teaching them to use Marxist, social science, and popular education methods to understand and change not only their colonial reality, but also themselves. This chapter covers the extreme surveillance the Proyecto faced, explaining how this repression forced the organization to find creative, but also clandestine, ways to continue their work as activists in the 1970s and 1980s. Cordero and the Proyecto did not simply work around the repression, they also responded to it. Cordero's work investigating the 1978 murder of two independentistas at Cerro Maravilla led to the dismantling of the Puerto Rican intelligence agency, marking a turning point in the way in which the independence movement was viewed on the island.

The fourth chapter, "Pride and Politics through Art," highlights the consciousness-raising techniques used within the artistic materials collectively produced by the Proyecto. Proyecto members created paquines (comic books), full-length plays, improvised skits called sociodramas, and recorded music. These materials emphasized the leadership characteristics that the Proyecto aimed to instill in its members, such as economic independence and critical thinking. The materials were used in support of several of the Proyecto's campaigns, such as the campaign against the mandatory military draft of Puerto Ricans during the Vietnam War, and the campaign to save Juana Matos, a squatter community that the Puerto Rican government wanted to destroy. And the materials were also educational, teaching members about complex topics such as the rise of global capitalism, and the intricate ways that workers are exploited and repressed. These popular education materials were effective because they drew from Puerto Rican vernacular language and culture. Former Proyecto members still remember lyrics to songs such as "Federico," and some still use sociodramas in their organizing work today. This chapter argues that the Proyecto's popular education materials were powerful because they centered Puerto

Rican history and culture in their quest to help members understand the connection between their struggle and the struggle of others around the world.

The final chapter is “The Long Resistance: Activism and its Afterlives.” This chapter discusses how Cordero’s activism transformed towards the end of her life, and it also considers her legacy. During her last decade of life, Cordero struggled with chronic breathing issues, but she continued to find ways to be involved in initiatives on and off the island. Cordero completed a significant amount of public and private writing during this period, publishing in Puerto Rican newspapers, and also working on a comprehensive organizing curriculum. Seasoned Proyecto members stepped up, continuing the educational work in places like Guayama, on the southern part of the island, and bringing groups of Puerto Ricans to Nicaragua to work with the revolutionary Sandinistas. Cordero and the Proyecto faced violent persecution from the state, but the group had also garnered a somewhat negative reputation in particular segments of society. Cordero overcame this ostracism in the early 1980s when she began working with respectable Puerto Rican leaders on broad-based campaigns such as the one in support of Haitian refugees incarcerated by the United States in one of Puerto Rico’s former military bases. This chapter seeks to provide an even more three-dimensional depiction of Cordero, providing details about her work as a mentor, mother, and friends, and taking advantage of primary sources where she is clearly defined as the author, and where we can literally hear her voice. There are dozens of recordings of political conversations that Cordero participated in during the 1980s and early 1990s, and this chapter considers the ways that Cordero’s voice and spirit continues to manifest despite the physical deterioration of her body.

My research on Cordero has taken me to Ghana, Puerto Rico, and various parts of the United States. As a woman with roots in the Dominican Republic, another nation from the

Hispanophone Caribbean, I have been able to pick up on valuable nuances while traveling through the physical sites that Cordero inhabited. I have interviewed and collaborated with over forty people who knew or worked with Cordero. Those who were close to Cordero are thrilled that her story is finally being told. For me, it has been an honor to become familiar with Cordero's life, the places she lived, and the people she knew. In addition, my story has come full circle—it has been a profound experience to work with others to create the archive I wish I had when I first began this project. Cordero's locations and relationships helped her generate insights and strategies that are as relevant to transnational liberation struggles today as they were during the years that she lived.

Chapter One

The Domestic is International: Coming of Age from the Great Depression to the Commonwealth

In a sepia toned photograph, a toddler in winter-wear—hat, gloves, coat, and scarf—sits on stone steps in a park.¹ She looks lost in thought, closely inspecting the end of a string that is attached to a wooden toy with four wheels. The writing on the other side of the photograph is in Spanish: “Tomada en el Ishiam [sic] Park, N.Y. el 2 de enero de 1933. Jugando con el horsy. Al año y medio de edad” (Taken in Isham Park, N.Y. on January 2, 1933. Playing with horsy. One and a half years old). This bilingual caption describes a young child named Ana Livia, who traveled to New York City in the early 1930s to visit her father, Rafael de J. Cordero.² Cordero left his native Puerto Rico in 1932 to pursue a Ph.D. in Economics at Columbia University.³ The photograph may have been taken by Ana Livia Garcés Cordero, Ana Livia’s mother and namesake. The Corderos were not the typical visitors to the city from the island. Cordero was 36 and Garcés was 32 and they traveled 1,600 miles, most likely by ship, with their first child in the midst of the Great Depression. Cordero was studying at one of the most elite universities in the country, and he and Garcés exposed their young daughter not only to a far-flung metropolis and the cold, but to the English language, to the point where her beloved toy was named “horsy.”

The photo of Ana Livia Cordero in Isham Park offers a snapshot into the foundations of what would continue to be a transnational life. From the 1930s to the 1950s, as Puerto Rico’s

¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Cordero photographs, 1933-1947. MC 824, PD.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

² For the purposes of differentiating between Ana Livia Cordero, her parents, and her sister in this chapter, I will refer to Ana Livia Cordero as “Ana Livia”; to her mother, Ana Livia Garcés Cordero, as “Garcés”; to her father, Rafael de J. Cordero, as “Cordero”; and to her sister, Nilda Cordero, as “Nilda.”

³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Rafael De Jesus Cordero documents, 1952-1975. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

political and economic status transformed, Ana Livia underwent familial, academic, and physical training that shaped her into the radical physician that she would be for the rest of her life. Ana Livia was born in 1931 to two, independently-minded parents who were part of a network of leaders on the island. She came of age during the Great Depression and the aftermath of World War II, eras of rapid, global change. Her parents took advantage of growing educational opportunities in Puerto Rico and the United States during the early twentieth century, eventually becoming professors and important political actors on the island. Ana Livia followed in her father's footsteps, traveling to New York City in the fall of 1949 to begin her studies at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. Due to her involvement in working-class, Puerto Rican activism and related social circles, she met and fell in love with Julian Mayfield, an African American immersed in New York's black, leftist arts scene. Ana Livia and Julian married and moved to Puerto Rico in 1954, where Ana Livia worked on public health projects under the auspices of the fledgling Estado Libre Asociado (free associated state), or Commonwealth government, established two years before their arrival.

As state workers who had relatively radical economic and political viewpoints, Ana Livia and her parents experienced lives full of colonial contradiction. I define colonial contradictions as the simultaneity of forces that reproduce colonial control, and those that establish and sustain independence. Ana Livia Garcés insisted on Spanish-language instruction in primary schools where English was enforced with violence. Rafael Cordero's primary reason for supporting Commonwealth status was because he calculated that such a status would provide the greatest economic opportunities for his fellow Puerto Ricans. A year after graduating from Columbia, Ana Livia returned to Puerto Rico where she worked at San Juan's Municipal Hospital, as well as the Puerto Rican Department of Health. Ana Livia and her parents were much more

professionally prepared than the average Puerto Rican, but they rejected lucrative careers and dedicated their lives to public service. Such public development—teaching, improving medical services, creating more equitable economic opportunities, and building up infrastructure—is radical in that it provides opportunities for survival for the maximum amount of people. Ana Livia and her parents worked within colonial structures to contribute to the practical development of Puerto Rico, but they were connected to more radical movements and not easily influenced by oppressive logics. Ana Livia and her parents contributed to the island’s liberation struggle as professionals who received specialized training in the United States, and engaged with the governments of both places. Colonial contradictions emerged as they worked to balance their beliefs with their responsibilities, but ultimately, their efforts are a part of Puerto Rico’s diverse resistance tradition.

This chapter describes the personal and political trajectories of Ana Livia and her parents during an intense period of development in Puerto Rico, ushered in by the New Deal, the rise of the Populares, and the creation of the Commonwealth. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Ana Livia’s experiences and contexts helped her develop an international outlook, as well as a deep understanding of the relationships between racism, imperialism, health, and social justice. This understanding was the result of not only the time Ana Livia spent in Communist circles, but of her vantage point as a Puerto Rican traveling through, and living in, the diaspora. Ana Livia’s gender and her status as a doctor were formative as well, since they made her a singular figure in the political and public health activities in which she was involved in 1940s and 1950s Puerto Rico and New York City. This chapter will also consider the blurred boundaries between domestic and international issues, at both the level of the island and Ana Livia’s home. Ana

Livia experienced contradictions and entanglements early in life that fundamentally shaped her political perspective and approach.

Roots and Perspectives: Ana Livia Cordero's Early Years

Ana Livia was born on July 4, 1931.⁴ She grew up alongside her younger sister Nilda (born 1935) in faculty housing located on the campus of the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras, referred to as the “university farm.”⁵ Ana Livia grew up with a mother who defined herself as an atheist and socialist, and a father who was meticulous and practical when it came to political and economic work that would ensure the maximum well-being of all Puerto Ricans. Although many people lived in desperate conditions in 1930s Puerto Rico, Ana Livia was born to educated parents who were at the forefront of reshaping Puerto Rico during the New Deal and Populares era. Ana Livia's parents came to embody the contradictions of colonialism during this era of changing politics in Puerto Rico. Ana Livia's father worked under the PPD government, and both parents worked at the university, a public institution, but they also had independentista and socialist tendencies. Their viewpoints on the best political and economic course for their island went beyond what the PPD offered. And yet, in their calculation to become state workers under the United States and the PPD, Ana Livia's parents likely took into consideration the well-being of their two daughters as well, since these positions provided them with resources that they could invest in the development of their own family. Ana Livia's early years were marked by

⁴ As Ana Livia's birthday arrived each year, she may have asked a question similar to the one Frederick Douglass asked in 1852, when considering the contradictions that the Fourth of July caused for enslaved people: what, to the Puerto Rican, is your 4th of July? The day's ironies must have been acute for many Puerto Ricans, not just for Cordero. Of course, for Cordero, this synchronicity meant that even on the day of her birth, it would be quite difficult to avoid the gravity of the vexed Puerto Rican-United States relationship.

⁵ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013.

exposure to the colonial contradictions experienced by her parents and the island of her birth. Experiments in Puerto Rican development led to fluidity between domestic and international affairs at the level of her home and Puerto Rico.⁶

Ana Livia was born during the global economic depression, a time of economic difficulty that manifested much more severely on the island, sparking protests and critiques of colonialism and capitalism. There was also a crisis in Puerto Rico's sugar industry, which had been lucrative for owners from the United States and the island since 1898.⁷ The depression of the world sugar industry began in 1920, and by the early 1930s, incomes were falling and unemployment was rising in Puerto Rico.⁸ The financial hardships on the island were exacerbated by two destructive hurricanes that hit the island in 1928 and 1932.⁹ Dockworkers and workers in the tobacco, needle trade, and sugar industries began striking in 1933.¹⁰ In January of 1934, sugar workers began a general strike.¹¹ During the 1930s, striking nationalists faced extreme repression, the most intense example of which was during the Ponce massacre of 1937.¹² Despite this repression, one marginalized group on the island was given access to more political power when Puerto Rican women gained the right to vote in 1936.¹³

⁶ See Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*.

⁷ Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico*, 103.

⁸ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 96.

⁹ Carmen Teresa Whalen, "Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: An Introduction," in *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Carmen Teresa Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 16.

¹⁰ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 96.

¹¹ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 97.

¹² Miñi Seijo Bruno, *La Insurrección Nacionalista en Puerto Rico 1950* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial Edil [1985] 1997).

¹³ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 69.

This was the context in which the Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party), also known as the PPD or Populares, emerged. Along with others, Luis Muñoz Marín founded the PPD in 1938. In the beginning, the PPD was an inclusive political party which addressed the demands of a broad swath of the Puerto Rican population.¹⁴ The PPD's base included women fighting for the vote, protesting workers, and individuals critiquing U.S. colonialism.¹⁵ Muñoz Marín emerged as the leader of the party, and he came to be known as the “man of the people.” Muñoz Marín campaigned by reaching out directly to various sectors of Puerto Rican society, and he promised economic reforms that would improve living conditions for people on the island.¹⁶ While Muñoz Marín focused on economic and social concerns, his party put the question of political independence on hold. Instead, the Populares used the slogan “pan, tierra, y libertad” (bread, land, and liberty), focusing on material concerns that would lead to an everyday form of independence. The Populares built a powerful coalition by focusing on meeting the basic needs of a population that had faced a difficult two decades.¹⁷ From a political perspective, this was a winning strategy. Muñoz Marín became president of the Puerto Rican Senate in 1940, at the time the highest elected position for a Puerto Rican on the island. In 1944 and 1948, the PPD had a majority in government, and Luis Muñoz Marín was elected governor by 1948. However, by the late 1940s, the PPD had begun to repress and ignore the demands of some of the unrulier members of their coalition.¹⁸

¹⁴ Suárez Findlay, *We Are Left Without a Father Here*, 25.

¹⁵ Suárez Findlay, *We Are Left Without a Father Here*, 27.

¹⁶ Lillian Guerra, *Popular Expression and National Identity in Puerto Rico: The Struggle for Self, Community, and Nation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 265.

¹⁷ Solsiree del Moral, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 152-153.

¹⁸ Suárez Findlay, *We Are Left Without a Father Here*, 26.

Ana Livia's parents were part of a generation of Puerto Ricans who were trained to occupy a variety of professional and governmental positions on the island.¹⁹ People from the United States government and military have had power over Puerto Rico since 1899, when the Treaty of Paris went into effect.²⁰ However, Ana Livia's parents held leadership positions as individuals who were born and raised on the island. Ana Livia's parents were state workers accountable to Puerto Rico: her father was appointed to several government positions and both of her parents worked with the University of Puerto Rico, a public institution run by the Puerto Rican government (which at the time was a mixture of people from Puerto Rico and people appointed by the United States government). However, given the overall control the United States had over Puerto Rico, Ana Livia's parents were also technically accountable to the United States, specifically when they were in government or public positions. Interestingly, working under the purview—and with the permission of—the United States did not preclude Ana Livia's parents from having radical points of view. In an interview, Nilda asserted that her parents were socialists.²¹ Rafael, Ana Livia's son, clarified that Rafael de J. Cordero, his grandfather, was more of an economic socialist.²² Although this may seem like a contradiction, given the eventual economic policies of the PPD, scholars have identified the ways that Puerto Rican state workers,

¹⁹ For more on this generation of Puerto Rican technical and professional workers, see Geoff Burrows, "The New Deal in Puerto Rico: Public Works, Public Health, and the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, 1935-1955," (PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 2014). Also, as Suárez Findlay explains, "many of the formally educated PPD founders had participated in the U.S. government's New Deal attempts to restructure the island's economy and provide a social service safety net to its poorest residents." Suárez Findlay, *We Are Left Without a Father Here*, 26.

²⁰ Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History*, 143.

²¹ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013.

²² Rafael Mayfield, interview with Sandy Placido, January 2017.

especially during the period before Puerto Rico became a Commonwealth, brought radical, anti-imperial viewpoints and actions to their jobs within the Puerto Rican government.²³

Ana Livia's mother, Ana Livia Garcés (affectionately known as Doña Viví), was born in 1901 in San Germán, Puerto Rico. Garcés was raised in large family that struggled economically. Garcés's mother was a housewife named Amalia, and Garcés's father, Emilio, was a schoolteacher who loved to read. He assembled a large library, where he had many anti-clerical books. In fact, Garcés's father was a Grand Mason, and a "militant atheist."²⁴ This is in line with the type of ideologies that were popular in Puerto Rico following the withdrawal of Spanish colonial power.²⁵ In an interview Ana Livia conducted with her own mother, she recorded that individuals like her grandfather were seen as "libres pensadores" ("free thinkers").²⁶ Following in her father's footsteps, Garcés also grew up to be anti-clerical, eventually proclaiming herself an atheist and a socialist.²⁷ Garcés "had many problems in the university because of her socialist, pro-independence, atheist and anti-catholic views."²⁸ Rafael has shared that when Garcés was a professor at the University of Puerto Rico, she would announce this fact on the first day of class, and watch as some students walked out.²⁹ Garcés's combativeness became a reference point for

²³ Emma Amador, "Women Ask Relief for Puerto Ricans:" Social Workers, the Social Security Act and Puerto Rican Communities, 1933-1943," *LABOR: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* (12:3, December 2016): 105-129.

²⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Garcés (Doña Viví) memorias, 1980. MC 824, folder 1.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁵ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 16.

²⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Garcés (Doña Viví) memorias, 1980. MC 824, folder 1.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁷ Standing at 5'1", Garcés was a powerhouse. Ana Livia Cordero grew to be 5'4."

²⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Biography of Ana Livia Cordero by Rafael Mayfield, n.d. MC 824, folder 1.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Historia Familiar by Rafael Mayfield, n.d. MC 824, folder E.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

the family. Family members would say “se le salió lo Garcés” (their Garcés came out) when someone became very angry.³⁰ Samuel Aviles, Ana Livia’s partner during the final two decades of her life, once wrote of Doña Viví’s “sentimiento de lucha y esperanza para los seres humanos” (feeling of struggle and hope for human beings).³¹ Garcés was committed to social justice her entire life, and at the age of eighty, she wrote to the editor-in-chief of the *San Juan Star*, critiquing the newspaper for not reporting on important human rights issues, and for swaying to the will of economic and political interests: “As a University professor, I taught for many years a course called ‘The School and the Press in the Contemporary World.’ It was evident to us that journalistic objectivity did not exist as a newspaper will always reflect the position of its owners, not only in its editorial page but also in its news coverage.”³² Garcés was a critical thinker who understood the connection between capitalism and the media. Right in her own home, Ana Livia had a female role model who was strong, independent-minded, and socially aware.

Ana Livia’s mother became a teacher as soon as she graduated from high school, given the shortage of teachers due to World War I. Garcés worked in a rural village, and ran errands on a bicycle, which barely any other women did during this time.³³ One day, Garcés went to Aibonito with her sister, where she met her future husband Rafael de J. Cordero, who was working as a school inspector. In the interview between Cordero and her mother, Cordero records the following statement from her mother: “Empiezo a educarme y a sentir salir para

³⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Historia Familiar by Rafael Mayfield, n.d. MC 824, folder E.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Samuel Aviles tribute to Doña Viví, 1984. MC 824, folder 1.3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; letter to *San Juan Star*, September 20, 1981. MC 824, folder 1.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Garcés (Doña Viví) memorias, 1980. MC 824, folder 1.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

afuera las ideas de mi padre. Germinaron bajo la sombra de Rafael. Sus ideas eran tan parecidas a las de mi padre. Me sentia tan feliz” (I begin to educate myself and to feel emerging outwards the ideas of my father. They germinated under the shadow of Rafael. His ideas were so similar to my father’s. I felt so happy).³⁴ Garcés identified similarities between her free-thinking father and the man she would eventually marry. In fact, Garcés pointed to the role that Cordero had on her evolving political consciousness. However, according to Ana Livia, Garcés’s politics did diverge from her husband’s. When Inés Mendoza, the wife of Luis Muñoz Marín, died, Ana Livia wrote an article which explained, “Ana Livia Garcés, fue una de las mejores amigas de doña Inés en los años formativos del Partido Popular Democrático, considerándose a ambas más radicales que sus compañeros (Ana Livia Garcés, was one of the best friends of Inés during the formative years of the Popular Democratic Party, and they both considered themselves more radical than their partners).³⁵ Ana Livia’s writing about the divergent politics that coexisted in these relationships helps us understand how something like a colonial contradiction could exist within a marriage.

Rafael de J. Cordero’s intellectual abilities allowed him to gain access to education, travel, and employment. Born in 1897 in the mountains of Adjuntas, Puerto Rico, he was also the son of a schoolteacher (named Severo Cordero) and a housewife.³⁶ Cordero attended high school thanks to the proceeds from a prize-winning essay he had written.³⁷ Cordero graduated from the Escuela Normal of the University of Puerto Rico in 1917. He worked as an elementary and

³⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Garcés (Doña Vivi) memorias, 1980. MC 824, folder 1.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass

³⁶ For more on education in Puerto Rico at the turn of the century, see the work of del Moral, *Negotiating Empire*.

³⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Biography of Ana Livia Cordero by Rafael Mayfield, n.d. MC 824, folder 1.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

secondary school teacher in various locales – Adjuntas, Arecibo, Ponce, Fajardo, and Río Piedras – and he also served as assistant superintendent in Yauco-Guánica. He went on to receive a degree in Education, with high honors, from the University of Puerto Rico in 1927.

Cordero and Garcés moved to New York in 1928 so that Cordero could obtain a Masters degree at Columbia University. Garcés described the sacrifices she and Cordero took in order to study abroad” “Rafael vendio su caballo...reunimos un dinerito a estudiar. El a Columbia y yo de momento me tuve que ir a trabajar.” (Rafael sold his horse...we raised money to study. He to Columbia and I all of a sudden had to go work).³⁸ Cordero sold his horse and the couple lived in a hotel near Teacher’s College while Cordero studied and Garcés worked. Although Puerto Ricans were obtaining advanced degrees in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, it was a path that required commitment and focus. Cordero would return to Columbia University from 1932 to 1933, and again in 1939, to work on a doctorate in Economics.³⁹ From 1926 to 1941, for fifteen years, he worked as a professor in, and later director of, the Economics department at the University of Puerto Rico.⁴⁰ He worked under rector Dr. Carlos Chardón, who created the Chardón Plan, the land reform and economic reconstruction program implemented in Puerto Rico in 1934 as part of the United States’ New Deal.⁴¹

Cordero was appointed to a prestigious position in Rexford G. Tugwell’s government. Tugwell was governor of Puerto Rico from 1941 to 1946, the last governor of the island to be

³⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Garcés (Doña Vivi) memorias, 1980. MC 824, folder 1.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Rafael De Jesus Cordero documents, 1952-1975. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Rafael De Jesus Cordero documents, 1952-1975. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Rafael De Jesus Cordero documents, 1952-1975. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

from the United States and appointed by the United States.⁴² Like Cordero, Rexford G. Tugwell was educated at Columbia University. Tugwell had been a part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Brain Trust," a group of Columbia University scholars who advised the president. However, Tugwell's policies related to government-led social planning marked him as too radical for conservatives and the growing number of people concerned with communist and "un-American" activity.⁴³ Tugwell transitioned to his role as governor of Puerto Rico, where he came up against the growing power of Luis Muñoz Marín. Tugwell describes the tension that surrounded his decision to appoint Cordero as head of the State Insurance Fund from 1941 to 1943:

And then there was Muñoz to deal with. There turned up right away a need to replace the head of the State Insurance Fund. This was a difficult position to fill. It obviously required a trained economist. Muñoz suggested a party hack. I appointed a Professor of Economics from the University. [Mr. Rafael Cordero, afterward the first Puerto Rican Auditor.] And Muñoz was unhappy. So were all the party leaders...It embarrassed him with some of his local leaders who had no interest in theory but did have a consuming determination to control all the jobs in their vicinity, and at the least a desperate need to exhibit continuing influence on the party and on the Government...I did not know then, what I learned later, that not many Puerto Ricans would take an appointment without first asking Muñoz' permission. I had had luck, this time, in finding a courageous independent...For the moment, and until he could make up his mind that support of him did not guarantee competence for technical positions, I even kept two *Republicanos* in the Cabinet—the Commissioners of Health and of Agriculture and Commerce, much to the disgust of all good *Populares*.⁴⁴

This is a rich passage that says a lot about Cordero's politics, but also about the general political atmosphere in Puerto Rico at the time. Cordero was considered a "courageous independent," "a trained economist" who was not a "party hack" and took a position "without first asking Muñoz' permission." This passage also indicates that Muñoz Marín and the Populares were exerting extreme control over the Puerto Rican government and economy. Still, in 1943, Cordero was named Auditor of Puerto Rico. He served under Tugwell, Jesús T. Piñero (the only Puerto Rican

⁴² Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History*, 250.

⁴³ Michael V. Namorato, *Rexford Tugwell: A Biography* (Praeger, 1988)

⁴⁴ Rexford Guy Tugwell, *The Stricken Land: The Story of Puerto Rico* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1946) 166-167

governor to be appointed by the United States government, and who was in power from 1946 to 1949), and Luis Muñoz Marín.⁴⁵

The Training of a Radical Physician

Cordero's family and the setting in which she was raised likely contributed to her precociousness. On the university farm, Ana Livia and Nilda became friends with neighbors from the United States. In this way, they learned English at an early age.⁴⁶ In an interview, Nilda explained how the culture of their household also influenced Cordero.⁴⁷ Nilda remembered her parents spending a lot of time reading. Because the family had servants who helped around the house, even Garcés could spend more time reading than the average woman in Puerto Rico at the time. Thus, Nilda remembered wanting to play outside with her friends, while Cordero spent most of her time inside reading things like Plato and Aristotle.⁴⁸ Cordero's son added that his mother began reading Nancy Drew books lent to her by her American friends.⁴⁹ Nancy Drew's personality as an independent, curious, and adventurous girl spoke to Ana Livia, who was already being raised at home with powerful role models. Nilda also remembered that Ana Livia liked to climb trees, not common for young women of their class in Puerto Rico at that time.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Rafael De Jesus Cordero documents, 1952-1975. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Biography of Ana Livia Cordero by Rafael Mayfield, n.d. MC 824, folder 1.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴⁷ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013.

⁴⁸ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013. Beginning at 24:09 minutes on the recording.

⁴⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Biography of Ana Livia Cordero by Rafael Mayfield, n.d. MC 824, folder 1.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁰ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013.

Cordero had a front row seat, at a young age, to Puerto Rico's major debates around economic development and governance from a variety of perspectives. The status of Cordero's parents meant that they were close to key people in government. Nilda recounted that every Sunday afternoon, her parents would host a range of political and economic leaders at their home. Cordero would listen in as the group ate, drank and discussed.⁵¹ Cordero was listening to political discussions during an important period of transition for Puerto Rico. Her parents and their friends and colleagues did not only discuss the future of Puerto Rico. They also discussed events such as the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Cordero and her mother collected scrap metal to support the Republican cause in Spain, and the family closely monitored developments during World War II, especially since one of Ana Livia's uncles fought in the war.⁵² And meanwhile, Cordero's exposure to global issues continued to grow as she traveled outside of Puerto Rico, such as when she stayed with her mother at the Hotel Ansonia on the upper west side of Manhattan during the summer of 1941, when her father was a visiting Economics professor at City College of New York.⁵³

Ana Livia's family connections helped her gain access to elite spaces. After taking courses at Mary Washington College at the University of Virginia in 1946, Ana Livia enrolled at the University of Puerto Rico in the fall of 1946, at the age of fifteen. Other students looked up to Ana Livia because in addition to being friendly, beautiful, relatively young, and a talented ballet dancer, she was a committed student who earned high grades. From the fall of 1946 to the

⁵¹ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013. Beginning at 21:40 minutes on the recording.

⁵² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Biography of Ana Livia Cordero by Rafael Mayfield, n.d. MC 824, folder 1.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Census/passenger lists. MC 824, folder 1.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

spring of 1948 (including the summer of 1947), Ana Livia took classes such as English, French, Introduction to Western Culture, Zoology, Organic Chemistry, Astronomy, Algebra, Psychology, and Physics, earning A grades in three-quarters of her classes, and B grades in the rest.⁵⁴

By the time she reached her final year at the University of Puerto Rico, Ana Livia had become the university's prima ballerina, dancing alongside Walter Mercado, a fellow student who would go on to become an important astrologist loved by Latino communities throughout the diaspora. Ana Livia's training in ballet is significant for several reasons. One, it highlights an era at the University of Puerto Rico when professors were coming from outside of the island. Ana Livia's ballet instructor was a Jewish refugee from Germany, who had lived in the Dominican Republic before being hired by Jaime Benitez to establish a ballet program at the school.⁵⁵ In an interview with Walter Mercado, he explained that the dancers took ballet to different parts of the island, staging lessons and performances in public plazas, where they were met with enthusiasm.⁵⁶

Ana Livia's training in ballet is also important because the discipline and strength required in ballet is indicative of the discipline and strength that Cordero would have needed as a university and medical school student, and which she later used in her political organizing. Indeed, during her time as a dancer, Cordero maintained high grades, even while taking many science classes. In one photo, Ana Livia balances on her left toes as she leans forward, pointing her left arm in front of her, while her right leg and arm point behind her. Both sets of fingers are posed in the same way, as if she was reaching to grab something with her thumb and middle

⁵⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; University of Puerto Rico transcript, 1948. MC 824, folder FD.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁵ Walter Mercado, phone interview by Sandy Placido, February 18, 2017.

⁵⁶ Walter Mercado, phone interview by Sandy Placido, February 18, 2017.

finger, and a straight line can be drawn from the front of both of her legs down her toes. Ana Livia wore a long dress with tulle and ruffles, with several flowers in her hair. A young Walter Mercado stands behind her, his left arm holding her torso as he gazes down at her. This photo portrays many symbols of femininity, and ballet has been understood as a Western or Euro-centric art form. However, this photo also demonstrates the training that Ana Livia went through at a young age to develop strength, discipline, and focus. Her son Rafael recounted that ballet did not come easy for her, and that she had to practice very hard in order to become good at it.⁵⁷ Becoming a dancer means being able to be conscious of multiple things at once, while still looking graceful. It is also useful to fill in the analysis of this photo with what Mercado remembers about Ana Livia from this time. He remembered that she was a hard worker, expressing her desire to improve the state of the world. Interestingly, Mercado, Nilda, and Rafael all indicated that Ana Livia was not very politically active while in high school and college.⁵⁸ She was developing her political beliefs through her studies, but it would make sense that she was not one of the primary organizers of say, the 1948 student strike at the University of Puerto Rico.⁵⁹ During these years, Ana Livia's activism took the form of her physical and mental development as a student and dancer. It also seems that Ana Livia became politically active in a more typical sense once she arrived in New York City, given that she would have felt more empowered outside of the purview of her home, where her father was still adjusting to his new, high-level government position.

⁵⁷ Rafael Mayfield, personal communication with Sandy Placido.

⁵⁸ Interviews by Sandy Placido with Rafael Mayfield and Walter Mercado, and by Rafael Mayfield with Nilda Cordero.

⁵⁹ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 159.

In January of 1948, a Puerto Rican doctor named P. Morales Otero sent a letter Dr. A.E. Severinghaus, the Assistant Dean of Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. In the letter, Dr. Morales Otero wrote,

Miss Ana Livia Cordero, daughter of Mr. Rafael Cordero, Auditor of Puerto Rico, is applying for admission to your school. Miss Cordero is a pre-medical student of the University of Puerto Rico, with exceptional grades, and I would appreciate your favorable consideration of her application.⁶⁰

This letter indicated that Ana Livia was indeed an excellent student, but Dr. Morales Otero did not hesitate to state that she was also the daughter of an influential figure in Puerto Rico. A month later, the Dean replied to Dr. Morales Otero and said, "I am much impressed with the academic record and the apparent motivation of Miss Ana Livia Cordero...However...she is very young to enter medical school and I am sure that the extra year in college will greatly benefit her."⁶¹ Ana Livia proceeded to take additional classes at the University of Puerto Rico during the summer of 1948, and the 1948-1949 school year, including analytic geometry, physiology, botany, and calculus.⁶²

In October of 1948, Dr. Morales Otero followed up with the Dean once again, reminding him that Ana Livia would graduate in June of 1949, and Ana Livia's father wrote the Dean in December, letting him know that she would be able to travel to New York for an interview.⁶³ In the letter, Rafael Cordero also invited the Dean to Puerto Rico, for the inauguration of Muñoz Marín in 1949. He wrote,

⁶⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Medical school: "Letters [of] recommendation," 1948. MC 824, folder 2.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Medical school: "Letters [of] recommendation," 1948. MC 824, folder 2.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; University of Puerto Rico transcript, 1948. MC 824, folder FD.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Medical school: "Letters [of] recommendation," 1948. MC 824, folder 2.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

We shall inaugurate our first elected governor on January 2nd and may be [sic] you would like to come to Puerto Rico to spend your Christmas recess here and participate in the festivities. Although Dr. Morales Otero is now in South America there will be other good friends and colleagues who I am sure would be very happy to welcome you to our Island.⁶⁴

This is a good example of how Ana Livia's personal story intersected with the history of Puerto Rico. In a letter that he wrote on behalf of his daughter, the auditor of Puerto Rico was describing an upcoming inauguration.⁶⁵ The combination of Ana Livia's grades and her connections worked, and she began medical school at Columbia in the fall of 1949, at the age of eighteen.

Ana Livia's time in New York City helped her refine her political and technical development. As a student at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons in Washington Heights, Cordero spent time in an area with a growing population of migrants from the Hispanophone Caribbean. In 1950, there were 246,000 Puerto Ricans in New York City, many of them living in Manhattan on the Lower East Side, in East Harlem, and in Washington Heights. By 1960, the population of Puerto Ricans in New York City had increased to 613,000, with growing populations in the Bronx and Brooklyn.⁶⁶ Between 1945 and 1965, more than half a million Puerto Ricans (out of a total of about 2 million on the island) emigrated.⁶⁷ Many of the Puerto Ricans coming to the United States were displaced workers with independentista (pro-

⁶⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Medical school: "Letters [of] recommendation," 1948. MC 824, folder 2.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶⁵ Another example of individual connections being representative of larger trends, or of how big events in history are made up of individuals and everyday, on the ground, acts, is when Muñoz Marín invited Kwame Nkrumah to his third inauguration as governor in 1957. Nkrumah couldn't come because Ghana was preparing for their independence in March of 1957. PRAAD archive, Accra, Ghana.

⁶⁶ Raquel Z. Rivera, *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 23. For more on how Puerto Rican migration shaped major cities in the United States, see Jesse Hoffnang-Garskoff, *A Tale of Two Cities*; Mérida Rúa, *Grounded Identity*; Carmen Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia*; Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen*; and Sonia Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement*.

⁶⁷ Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 13.

independence) tendencies—their exodus from the island was facilitated in order to avoid political unrest.⁶⁸ In an area as physically compact as Manhattan, Ana Livia’s interactions with the city’s population of Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and whites likely shaped her developing ideas about anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist struggle.

Although Ana Livia was one of many Puerto Ricans entering the United States in the post-World War II era, she was not a typical Puerto Rican migrant. Ana Livia arrived in New York City as a medical student, unlike the thousands of Puerto Rican migrants who left the island due to economic necessity. Ana Livia stood out as a medical student as well. Not only was she one of the few female medical students at Columbia at the time, she was one of the few Puerto Ricans, and likely one of the only Puerto Rican women.⁶⁹ Ana Livia had reason to feel a part of, but also disconnected from, the elite and working-class spaces she inhabited. Although this unique positionality may have led to feelings of isolation, Ana Livia thrived in medical school, probably motivated by her desire to improve the quality of life for Puerto Ricans on the island and in the diaspora.

In various pieces of writing, Ana Livia made clear the influence that living in New York City had on her. In the letter she wrote to Malcolm X in 1964, she described herself as a “Puerto Rican who has done political work among my people in New York.”⁷⁰ She explained that Puerto Ricans had to understand that they and African Americans share common problems and a common oppressor, and she described how nationalism and racism divided African American

⁶⁸ Rivera, *New York Ricans*, 23; Producciones Zaranda, “Dialogando sobre independentismos: entre votos, consignas y trincheras, part 1”, [videorecording], 2005.

⁶⁹ The few women who attended Columbia Medical School at this time came from schools in the mainland United States such as Mount Holyoke. Stephen E. Novak, Head of Archives and Special Collections at Columbia, phone interview by Sandy Placido, March 8, 2011.

⁷⁰ Ana Livia Cordero to Malcolm X, August 25, 1964, box 14, folder 2, Malcolm X papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

and Puerto Rican communities on the mainland. In 1966, after traveling to the Tricontinental Conference in Cuba, she wrote to the other members of the Puerto Rican delegation and explained,

mi posición política ante el problema afro-americano. Deseo aclarar que esta posición fue desarrollada anterior a mi relación personal con mi esposo y como resultado de mi experiencia en Nueva York y que fué precisamente esta posición la que me llevó a contactos con los grupos afro-americanos lo que resultó en una relación personal con uno de ellos. Desde ese momento mi mayor contacto con la lucha afro-americana me ha llevado a un mayor entendimiento de su naturaleza. (Nuestras posiciones políticas están siempre basadas en nuestras experiencias como individuos y nuestro desarrollo ideológico, cosa que claramente apuntó Marx).⁷¹

(My political position on the African-American problem. I want to clarify that this position was developed prior to my personal relationship with my husband and as a result of my experience in New York and that it was precisely this position that led me to contacts with African American groups which resulted in a personal relationship with one of them. From that moment my greater contact with the African American struggle has led me to a greater understanding of its nature. (Our political positions are always based on our experiences as individuals and our ideological development, which Marx clearly pointed out).)

In this passage, Ana Livia emphasized how formative her time living in New York was. She clarified that her commitment to the African American struggle developed due to her relationship with African American groups in that city, which then led to her personal relationship with Mayfield. Ana Livia herself articulated one of the central arguments of this thesis, which is the power of lived experience on a person's political formation.

After graduating from Columbia in 1953, Cordero began her residency at Sydenham Hospital in Harlem, the first private hospital in the United States "to take both white and Negro physicians."⁷² Cordero's identity as a white-presenting woman from Puerto Rico with a Spanish accent (when she spoke English) complicates desegregation narratives of post-war New York City. Cordero integrated Sydenham Hospital in ways that were somewhat less obvious than if

⁷¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Memo from Cordero to Puerto Rican delegation, 1966. MC 824, folder 11.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁷² "Medicine: Harlem Shuffle," *Time* magazine, Monday, Nov. 20, 1944. Accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,796799,00.html#ixzz19H7cXyHv>

she was an African American woman or man. Cordero served as a resource for patients in a city with a Caribbean and Spanish-speaking population that grew exponentially in the 1940s and 1950s. However, her contributions may not have been recognized as significant for the Puerto Rican population if she was misidentified. She existed at the intersection of various communities—black, white, immigrant, non-English speaking, poor, elite, educated, citizen, and non-citizen. The multiple layers of Cordero’s background led to various forms of inclusion and exclusion. For example, Cordero could identify as black because of historical reasons, but she was not immediately recognizable as a person of African descent; she could pass for white, but the moment she spoke English, her accent “outed” her as a foreigner; she was one of the many people who migrated to New York in the 1940s, but she entered the city as a United States citizen; her bilingualism was advanced, given her education in both Puerto Rico and the United States; and she was a woman studying medicine at one of the best universities in the world, despite the overwhelming power of patriarchy at the time. Ana Livia’s experience foreshadows other moments where the pioneering presence and contributions of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos are unnoticed, misread, ignored, and excluded. Cordero’s experiences also serve as an entry point for exploring the variety of ways that segregation and integration policies were applied to, and circumvented by, non-African Americans at the time.

Ana Livia met Julian Mayfield during the time she was completing her residency at Sydenham Hospital. In an unpublished autobiography, Mayfield described Ana Livia as an accomplished woman with strong political beliefs:

At the time we met she was completing her internship at Sydenham Hospital. I was quite taken with Ana Livia who was a brilliant and attractive young woman. She had graduated from the Universities of Puerto Rico and Columbia with high honours. I was particularly impressed that she had not bothered to go to the graduation exercises because President Eisenhower was at that

time president of Columbia and like many of today's students she did not want to accept her diploma from a person for whom she had little respect. She had it mailed to herself instead.⁷³

Julian indicated that Ana Livia not only graduated with high honors from the University of Puerto Rico, but from Columbia as well. Ana Livia was also a woman of political conviction, and in the particular passage quoted, she even sounds like her mother—perhaps in her family, they joked with her and told her, se “te salió lo Garcés” when she chose to refuse her diploma from Eisenhower, and had it mailed to herself instead. That Ana Livia would complete the work required to achieve high honors, and then refuse to attend her graduation is an early example of Ana Livia's dedication to causes and to work that was not tied to a need for recognition. Ana Livia would continue to be someone who did not compromise her politics for simple, individual gratification.

Eisenhower was president of the United States from 1953 to 1961.⁷⁴ He became president the same year that Ana Livia graduated from Columbia, and a year after Puerto Rico became a Commonwealth. Ana Livia's father had a connection to Eisenhower as well, since he was comptroller of the newly established commonwealth during the same years that Eisenhower was president of the United States. Ana Livia probably disagreed with Eisenhower's foreign policy that promoted a form of democracy that favored capitalist countries during the Cold War.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, there is a photograph, likely taken after 1952, where Rafael de J. Cordero is standing

⁷³ Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁷⁴ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President (1952-1969)* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

⁷⁵ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower*.

between Luis Muñoz Marín and Eisenhower, while they converse and smoke.⁷⁶ This is additional evidence on the ways that Ana Livia's politics diverged from her father's during this period.

Mayfield's autobiography also hints at the politics of Cordero's mother during this time, revealing that Doña Vivi's political perspective was also harmonious with that of her daughter and her partner. At around the time that Cordero and Mayfield were getting to know each other, and Doña Vivi visited New York. Mayfield wrote,

Doña Vivi is quite a vivacious and active woman and she was concerned about her daughter's first marriage, which was on the rocks; she wanted to do all she could to patch it up. I was of course no help here as Doña Vivi had arrived too late and I was no factor in the break-up of Ana Livia's marriage. I took both of them to see the movie, *South of the A*, a picture that had been produced by progressives about the strike of the (silver-mine) workers in New Mexico. Doña Vivi became so involved in the movie...⁷⁷

The description of Doña Vivi coincides with the way that Cordero described her as well, indicating that Doña Vivi continued to be passionate about the right of workers to organize, especially during the mid-1950s context of oppression against communists and labor organizers.

Refined Political Directions: Relationships and Solidarities in the 1950s

By the end of the 1950s, Ana Livia's politics had not only crystallized, but also diverged from the politics of her parents, and especially from her father.⁷⁸ In both Puerto Rico and New York City, Ana Livia involved herself in communist party activities that ranged from organizing workers to protesting the atomic bomb. She also built solidarity with individuals and movements outside of Puerto Rico. She was involved in a Puerto Rican committee that resisted the Trujillo

⁷⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Photographs. MC 824, folder PD.5. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁷⁷ Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁷⁸ When I say politics, I am referring to a person's political perspective and approach, or in other words, their political beliefs and the actions they take to express those beliefs.

regime in the Dominican Republic, an instance of pan-Caribbean solidarity. And due to her experiences traveling between the island and the mainland, and interacting with people from other cultures, she developed a heightened awareness of the connections between racism and imperialism, and the ways that these intertwined power structures transcended nation-state boundaries. In fact, Ana Livia's relationship with Julian Mayfield, whom she married, is indicative of the bidirectional ways that political consciousness was formed between Puerto Ricans and other racial and national groups.

Early in her political career, Ana Livia became involved in organizations that were congruous with the politics of her father. One of Ana Livia's earliest roles in an explicitly political group was when she was the treasurer of the Comité Puertorriqueña Pro-Democracia Dominicana (The Puerto Rican Committee in favor of Dominican Democracy).⁷⁹ This organization opposed the regime of Rafael Trujillo in the neighboring Dominican Republic, and counted on the participation of many Populares and Independentistas.⁸⁰ In late 1949, Muñoz Marín ignored a delegation of Trujillistas who were visiting Puerto Rico, and this committee picketed in front of the Dominican Consulate. In an intelligence report produced by a Dominican spy in Puerto Rico, Ana Livia, who was no more than eighteen years old at the time, was the fourth listed member in a list of twenty-nine individuals, who included prominent Puerto Ricans

⁷⁹ Rafael Mayfield has said that Cordero was not a student activist at the University of Puerto Rico, and would not have participated in the 1948 student strikes. In my interview with Walter Mercado, he said that he did not remember Cordero being involved in politics on campus. And in the interview with Nilda, she states that she does not remember Ana Livia being very politically active until she arrived in New York City for medical school. Rafael did explain that Cordero may have been involved in a Marxist reading group, possibly formed by the medical doctor Maxwell Weisman. Richard Levins, a professor from the United States who taught at UPR for many years, explained that Jane Speed, the wife of the labor activist Cesar Andreu Iglesias, may have been involved in creation of these study groups. Richard Levins, interview by Sandy Placido in Cambridge, MA, May 13, 2013.

⁸⁰ Jorge Rodríguez Beruff, "Luis Muñoz Marín y Rafael Leonidas Trujillo: Una pugna caribeña, 1940-1961", p. 135, in *Caribe Imaginado: Visiones y representaciones de la region*, Laura Muñoz y María del Rosario Rodríguez Díaz, Eds. (Morelia, Michoacán, México: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2009), 131.

such as the social worker Carmen Rivera de Alvarado, the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) founder, Gilberto Concepción de Gracia, and Dr. Angel Marchand, one of Puerto Rico's first immunologists.

Given her father's work under the PPD, it would make sense that one of the first political organizations in which Ana Livia was a member had ties to the Populares. Part of this resistance to Trujillo on the part of the Populares is due to Muñoz Marín's own opposition to the man who had overseen the Dominican Republic since 1930. Relations between Muñoz Marín and Trujillo were tense until 1961, when Trujillo was killed. Even Trujillo's wife attempted to become closer with Inés Mendoza, Muñoz Marín's wife, but this endeavor was unsuccessful. Trujillo went so far as to appoint a former intelligence officer who had investigated anti-Trujillo opposition in the Dominican Republic as consul to Puerto Rico. This consul, José Ángel Saviñón, not only reported back to Trujillo on the growing number of Dominicans in Puerto Rico who opposed Trujillo, but on Muñoz Marín, the Populares, and Puerto Rican groups, such as the one Ana Livia was a part of, organizing in support of the anti-Trujillista cause.⁸¹

During the period that Ana Livia was in medical school and her father was in government, Puerto Rico did not only change economically, but also in terms of its political status and relationship with the United States. In 1948, there was an amendment to the Organic Act which gave Puerto Ricans the power to elect their governor, draft a constitution, and conduct a vote that would allow them to choose a more autonomous status.⁸² In early 1952, a Puerto

⁸¹ For more on this history, see Jorge Rodríguez Beruff, "Luis Muñoz Marín y Rafael Leonidas Trujillo: Una pugna caribeña, 1940-1961", p. 135, in *Caribe Imaginado: Visiones y representaciones de la region*, Laura Muñoz y María del Rosario Rodríguez Díaz, Eds. (Morelia, Michoacán, México: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2009).

⁸² The original Organic Act, also known as the Foraker Act, was passed at the beginning of United States rule in Puerto Rico, and had established a United States civilian government, a governor and executive council appointed by the United States president, a Puerto Rican House of Representatives, and a non-voting Puerto Rican member of the United States Congress. Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 26.

Rican Constitution was approved by a Constitutional Convention, as well as by Puerto Ricans who voted in a referendum. On July 25, 1952, after the Constitution was modified by the United States Congress and approved by President Truman, Puerto Rico became a Commonwealth, or Estado Libre Asociado/Free Associated State (in relation to the United States). Although Puerto Ricans were given the opportunity to draft and vote on a constitution, the United States Congress and President still had the power to modify and decide whether to approve it, making the process less than democratic. However, the role of Puerto Ricans in the establishment of the Commonwealth meant that the island was removed from the United Nations list of colonized countries.⁸³ Activists such as Ana Livia would have to expend additional energy ensuring that Puerto Rico be included in international movements that promoted decolonization, Third World solidarity, and non-alignment.⁸⁴ The establishment of the Commonwealth also had economic implications, leaving “the door wide open for U.S. investors.”⁸⁵ Although started in the 1940s, the 1950s saw the rise of the industrialization program known as *Manos a la Obra* or Operation Bootstrap, which provided “tax exemptions, along with low wages” to “attract U.S. investors to Puerto Rico.”⁸⁶

Despite whatever tensions that may have existed, in 1952, Muñoz Marín named Cordero first comptroller of the Puerto Rican Commonwealth, a position he held until 1961.⁸⁷ Cordero

⁸³ For more on the creation of the Puerto Rican commonwealth, see Juan Mari Bras, “El caso de Puerto Rico en la ONU,” in *Abriendo Caminos: Selección de discursos y ponencias que son hilo conductor del pensamiento político del autor durante el curso de cuarenta y dos años*, (Editora Causa Común, 2001).

⁸⁴ For more on the creation of the Puerto Rican commonwealth see del Moral, *Negotiating Empire*, 153.

⁸⁵ Whalen, “Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora,” 27.

⁸⁶ Whalen, “Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora,” 27. For more on Operation Bootstrap see Guerra, *Popular Expression and National Identity in Puerto Rico*, 265-266.

⁸⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Rafael De Jesus Cordero documents, 1952-1975. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

took his governmental positions seriously, and he is remembered positively. In the twenty-five years following World War II, Puerto Rico transformed from an agricultural economy into an industrial one, “one of the more rapid industrial revolutions.”⁸⁸ Cordero successfully managed the finances of Puerto Rico during this time, and commentators have noted his integrity and effectiveness while in the position.⁸⁹ When Cordero died in 1974, Mayfield sent his condolences to Garcés, commenting on her husband’s “sterling honesty” and describing him as “one of the kindest and most honourable gentlemen that I have ever met.”⁹⁰

Interestingly, Cordero was an early advocate of Commonwealth status, an example of a colonial contradiction within the domestic space of his home, given that Ana Livia would organize, throughout the 1960s, so that others would continue to recognize Puerto Rico as a colony. Tugwell commented on Cordero’s support of the Commonwealth in his book:

In my Commonwealth trend I found company in a group which was at this time affiliating with the Free World Federation. Among those most interested were Mr. Campos del Toro, Mr. Guerra Mondragón, lawyers, and Mr. Rafael Cordero, economist. These three called on me in company one day and suggested that the existing acerbities concerning status might be eased by a new formula. I urged that they work out a proposal related to the Organic Act, making as few changes as possible, so that we might study the matter further...I reminded them, however, of the difficulties and referred to the intransigence [sic] of the separatists, whose aims seemed wholly irreconcilable with the need of Puerto Rico...All this economic assistance might hurt like the mischief. But its lack would hurt more and it had to be maintained. The studies of this group would be carried on rather casually for a time and would issue in a memorandum by Mr. Guerra Mondragón...this more comprehensive proposal would be lost for the time being in the preparations for discussing the simpler suggestion for an elective Governor with only the changes in the Organic Act which were relevant to that.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Whalen quoting James Dietz, “Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora,” 28.

⁸⁹ Jose Arsenio Torres has written, “Our Constitution established the Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico as a defense against corruption. Our first comptroller, Don Rafael de J. Cordero honored and cemented that function with skill, thoroughness and fair play also for the public officials under his care. He established, with a Roman sense of honor and justice, a model to be followed by the Comptrollers who succeeded him, without much success” (translation my own). In “Un Contralor que no Controla,” May 9, 2013, accessed at <http://josearseniotorresopina.blogspot.com/2013/05/una-contralora-que-no-controla.html>

⁹⁰ Julian Mayfield papers, box 7, folder 11, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁹¹ Tugwell, *The Stricken Land*, 492.

This passage indicates that Cordero was an important player in discussions and planning around the creation of the Commonwealth that were taking place as early as 1943. Tugwell noted that Cordero, del Toro, and Mondragón were affiliated with the Free World Federation, an international, anti-fascist movement. This team worked on the modifications to the Organic Act that initiated that process that led to the creation of the Commonwealth. Tugwell believed that Puerto Rican separatists were not considering the economic benefits of the island's relationship with the United States.

By the time Puerto Rico had become a Commonwealth, Ana Livia's politics had already begun to diverge from those of her father. When Ana Livia arrived in New York City in the fall of 1949 to begin medical school, she became active in the Puerto Rican community in East Harlem, where she lived while attending Columbia on the other side of Manhattan. Nilda explained that Ana Livia became heavily involved with a variety of movements and groups, and specifically with a meatpackers union. However, Nilda recounted that Ana Livia's first husband, Charlie Rosario did not approve of her excessive political activities.⁹² Rosario's father, José Colombán Rosario, was also a scholar and professor, and Charlie and Ana Livia fell in love while in Puerto Rico. Rosario was also very smart and he followed Ana Livia to New York City to work on a Masters in Sociology.⁹³ As Ana Livia became more and more involved in political activities, their relationship deteriorated.⁹⁴

⁹² Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013.

⁹³ Charlie Rosario would later work as an assistant on the ethnographic investigations that culminated in *The People of Puerto Rico*, a book by Julian Steward and a variety of other anthropologists, such as Sidney Mintz and Elena Padilla.

⁹⁴ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013.

When Ana Livia returned to Puerto Rico after her first year of medical school, she was no longer organizing with Populares and Independentistas, but with organizations with a more global outlook, and which were associated with the Communist Party. During the summer of 1950, a summer during which she also taught at Central High School in Santurce, Ana Livia was arrested for protesting the atomic bomb with what was described as a communist front organization. Her arrest made the front page of *El Imparcial* on July 15, 1950, with the following headline: “Arrestan hija del auditor en actividad comunista” (The daughter of the auditor is arrested in communist activity).⁹⁵ The article continues,

Ana Libia Cordero Garcés, estudiante universitaria, hija del Dr. Rafael de J. Cordero, Auditor de Puerto Rico, y de su esposa, Ana Libia Garcés de Cordero, catedrática de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, fue arestada ayer...Según la Policía, Arroyo Zeppenfeldt y Ana Libia Cordero Garcés colocaron una mesa en la acera, frente al New York Department Store, en la Parada 16, de Santurce, a donde invitaban a los que por allí pasaban, a que firmaran el llamamiento hecho por el Congreso Mundial de los Partidarios de la Paz, celebrado en Estocolmo, bajo los auspicios de los líderes de Moscú.⁹⁶

(Ana Libia Cordero Garcés, a university student, daughter of Dr. Rafael de J. Cordero, Auditor of Puerto Rico, and his wife, Ana Libia Garcés de Cordero, professor of the University of Puerto Rico, was arrested yesterday ... According to the Police, Arroyo Zeppenfeldt and Ana Libia Cordero Garcés placed a table on the sidewalk, in front of the New York Department Store, at Stop 16, in Santurce, where they invited those who passed by, to sign the appeal made by the World Congress of The Supporters of Peace, held in Stockholm under the auspices of the leaders of Moscow.)

The article indicates that Ana Livia was arrested with the “communist leader” Manuel Arroyo Zeppenfeldt for interrupting transit while collecting signatures in response to a call from the Congreso Mundial de los Partidarios de la Paz (World Congress of the Supporters of Peace), sponsored by the Russian government.⁹⁷ By mentioning the profession of her parents, the article

⁹⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Clippings, 1950-1971. MC 824, folder 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Clippings, 1950-1971. MC 824, folder 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Clippings, 1950-1971. MC 824, folder 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

emphasizes Ana Livia's elite affiliation and implies that it is a disgrace that a person of such standing would participate in activities that were understood to be against the best interests of both the United States and Puerto Rico. The article explains that Ana Livia and others were held under a \$200 bond, and it made clear to readers that the "North American Secretary of State" as well as the House Un-American Activities Committee declared this movement as a "new strategy of the Russians to 'confuse and divide the North American people.'" Not only was Ana Livia participating in an activity that triggered backlash from repressive forces in the United States. Ana Livia was also operating in a Puerto Rican context, where La Ley de la Mordaza, or the Gag Law, passed in 1948 to resemble the Smith Act in the United States, made radical activities such as these especially noticeable to intelligence officials. The Gag Law was passed during the year that Muñoz Marín became governor, which brings into question whether such a measure was also meant to squash opposition to his authority.

On July 14, 1950, the day Ana Livia was arrested, the Puerto Rican police wrote one of Cordero's first intelligence entries. They described her as "blanca de 19 años de edad, residente en los terrenos de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Estudiante de medicina en la Universidad de Columbia. Hija del Hon. Auditor de Puerto Rico" (white and 19 years of age, resident on the lands of the University of Puerto Rico. Medical student at Columbia University. Daughter of the honorable auditor of Puerto Rico).⁹⁸ Again, the report emphasized Ana Livia's elite affiliation, but also her race and her gender. There seemed to be anxiety about a communist threat emerging from a white woman with such an elite background and ties to the Puerto Rican government.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; División Inteligencia files, 1950-1967. MC 824, folder 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁹ There were other activists in Cordero's generation who came from politically powerful families and garnered the interest of intelligence officials due to radical organizing. Muna Muñoz Lee, the daughter of Luis Muñoz Marín, became an activist in Chicago in the 1940. For more, see the work of Mérida Rúa, *A Grounded Identity*.

Meanwhile, Cordero used economic reasoning to determine what he thought was the best political status for Puerto Rico. In 1960, years after the creation of the Commonwealth, Ana Livia presented with José Monserrat, the head of Puerto Rico's Migration Division, at an event organized by the Riverside Democrats at Riverside Church in New York City. The topic of the event was "El Futuro de Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, Independencia, Stadidad?"¹⁰⁰ (The Future of Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, Independence, Statehood). After the event, Monserrat was inspired to write to Rafael Cordero. He explained that meeting Ana Livia left him "encantado aunque diferimos de criterio" (delighted although we differ in opinion). Cordero replied immediately, and he wrote,

Entre tú y yo tal vez podamos convencerla de que el status actual de Puerto Rico es el que más conviene a nuestro país y sobretodo [sic] a nuestra gente cuyo bienestar sería afectado adversamente por la estadidad y mucho más por la independencia. A mi juicio, la independencia constituiría un desastre económico para Puerto Rico, y la estadidad, en las actuales circunstancias, sería muy costosa y pararía en seco el programa de desarrollo industrial.¹⁰¹

(Between you and me we may be able to convince her that the current status of Puerto Rico is the one that best suits our country and especially our people whose welfare would be adversely affected by statehood and much more by independence. In my opinion, independence would be an economic disaster for Puerto Rico, and statehood, in the present circumstances, would be very costly and would stop the industrial development program in its tracks.)

From this exchange, it can be inferred that Ana Livia supported the independence of Puerto Rico while her father supported the Commonwealth status. However, Cordero's opinion on the matter was not a sign of his submission to colonial control. His position was based on the belief that Commonwealth status would provide the best economic opportunities for the most number of people on the island. This 1960 exchange marks a major point of divergence between Ana Livia and her parents, especially her father.

¹⁰⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; letter and flier re: 1960 Ana Livia Cordero talk. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁰¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; letter and flier re: 1960 Ana Livia Cordero talk. MC 824, folder 1.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Throughout the rest of her life, Ana Livia would become increasingly critical of the United States, going so far as to call the country “her enemy.”¹⁰² An article published by the *San Juan Star* in 1968 compared Ana Livia’s politics to the politics of her parents in the following way:

He is considered too conservative by his daughter. She says she is completely opposed to her father’s political views (he is a member of the PDP and a believer in the Commonwealth status). However, in a rare instance of political suspension, Ana Livia sees her father as a man she admires for his courage and integrity. It is said the father also admires the daughter on the same grounds. Ana Livia’s mother is said to be much closer politically to her daughter. During Ana Livia’s trial in April in the Rio Piedras District Court for resisting arrest during a police raid on the project, her mother was in court.¹⁰³

Although Ana Livia and her father admired each other’s integrity, this passage makes clear that they had different views on what the best status of the island should be. Meanwhile, Ana Livia and her mother had viewpoints that were more in line with each other. Although Ana Livia drew from her parents critical and human-rights perspectives on the state of Puerto Rico, she diverged from them politically as she entered adulthood, becoming increasingly interested in developing Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rico from within, without the decision-making power of the United States hovering over the island.

One of the important factors which shaped Cordero’s outlook was her ability to travel outside of Puerto Rico. She traveled to New York City as early as 1933, returning various times with her parents throughout the 1930s and 1940s, even before beginning medical school. These experiences of witnessing the differences between various societies at such a young age likely provoked questions and thinking for Cordero about the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. There are various primary and secondary accounts of the political formation and

¹⁰² “People with a Purpose: Revolution,” *San Juan Star*. 1968.

¹⁰³ “People with a Purpose: Revolution,” *San Juan Star*. 1968.

evolution of transnational Puerto Ricans during the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁴ These narratives detail how travel and relationships became factors in solidarity building between Puerto Ricans and African Americans. The fact that after 1917, Puerto Ricans were United States citizens who could travel with a United States passport created opportunities for connections with other people, places, and struggles. In addition, Puerto Rico, as a place where United States citizens could travel without a passport made it an important destination for tourists and leftists alike. Various historiographical works show how this mobility led to relationships between Puerto Ricans and African Americans who lived, worked, created culture, and struggled together. However, despite the presence and participation of Puerto Ricans in New York City throughout the twentieth century, during the early decades of their migration, they were “still a nearly invisible minority” within the urban landscape.¹⁰⁵

Ana Livia returned to Puerto Rico in 1954. During this time, she worked for the Puerto Rican Department of Health, as well as at hospitals and clinics throughout the island. She lived on the island with Julian Mayfield, the African American artist and activist that she met during her time in New York City, who she married in late 1954. Cordero and Mayfield had their first child, Rafael Ariel, in 1957, and returned to New York City in 1958, where Cordero completed additional residencies at hospitals throughout the city. Although Cordero was involved in Puerto Rico’s nation-building project as a physician and researcher, she remained critical of colonial control on the island. Puerto Rico’s status as a “free associated state” meant that its people experienced racialized and capitalist-driven exploitation as a United States territory that was both domestic and foreign. As peoples and histories of Puerto Rico and the United States continued to

¹⁰⁴ See the work of Jesus Colon, Bernardo Vega, Elena Padilla, Juan Flores, Carlos Alamo, Ruth Glasser, Andres Torres, Carmen Whalen, and Sonia Lee.

¹⁰⁵ Ruth Glasser, *My Music is my Flag*, 69. For more on Puerto Rican invisibility, see Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen*.

intertwine, Ana Livia dedicated herself even more fully to the liberation of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans.

Chapter Two

Havana to Accra and beyond: Cordero promoting Puerto Rican liberation internationally, 1954-1966

Puerto Rico no puede quedarse a la saga del mundo. En África ha surgido una docena de naciones, en el ultimo año, que son producto de una voluntad de libertad manifestada contra la Europa imperialista. Ha surgido en Asia y en Oceanía esa misma voluntad de liberación. Y está surgiendo en América. América es la última gran reserva que tiene el mundo para hacer que en el globo terráqueo pueda surgir un orden, un equilibrio y una civilización desprovista de todas las presiones y agresiones que han obstaculizado el progreso de la humanidad a través de los siglos.¹

(Puerto Rico cannot be left out of the world's saga. In Africa a dozen nations have emerged in the last year, which are products of a desire for freedom expressed against imperialist Europe. There has emerged in Asia and Oceania that same desire for liberation. And it is emerging in America. America is the last great reserve in the world before a global order, balance and civilization devoid of all the pressures and attacks that have hampered the progress of mankind through the centuries can emerge.)

-Juan Mari Bras

It is possible that Ana Livia Cordero traveled to the Bronx in March 1959 to hear Juan Mari Bras deliver a speech on the anniversary of the United States sponsored massacre of nationalists that occurred in Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1937. Cordero, Mayfield, and their soon to be two-year-old son, Rafael, were living in East Elmhurst, Queens, while Cordero completed a residency as a Researcher in the Chest Service at Bellevue Hospital. The family left Puerto Rico in 1958, after living on the island for four years. Mari Bras delivered his speech only two months after the Cuban Revolution, a momentous event that had inspired the creation of the Movimiento Pro Independencia (Pro Independence Movement or MPI) in Puerto Rico. In his speech, Mari Bras acknowledged the dozens of new nations in Africa and Asia that had challenged imperialist

¹ Juan Mari Bras, "La Masacre de Ponce," speech delivered March 22, 1959 in the Hunts Point Palace in the Bronx, New York City on the occasion of the anniversary of the Ponce Massacre, in *Abriendo Caminos: Selección de discursos y ponencias que son hilo conductor del pensamiento político del autor durante el curso de cuarenta y dos años*, (Editora Causa Común, 2001), 23.

powers in Europe. The recent revolution in Cuba made dreams of an independent Puerto Rico seem possible, catalyzing the liberation struggle. However, Puerto Rico's conversion into a Commonwealth meant that activists had to work harder so that allies would recognize the island as a colony.

Cordero was one of the key Puerto Rican activists in the post-1952 period who worked to sustain the Puerto Rican liberation struggle, and ensure that the island was included in decolonization movements taking place around the world. The years between 1954 and 1966 in particular mark a period during which Cordero heavily promoted Puerto Rican liberation with non-Puerto Ricans and at Third World sites beyond the island. Cordero lived with Mayfield in Puerto Rico from 1954 to 1958, and this experience had a profound impact on Mayfield's political consciousness. Cordero publicly advocated for Puerto Rico when she traveled to Cuba in 1960 during the island's commemoration of its revolution. She and her family relocated to Ghana in 1961, where Cordero worked as a doctor, medical school professor, public health researcher, and MPI's Representative in Africa until 1966. Cordero astutely took advantage of her political and professional positions, her locations, and her relationships in order to garner support for Puerto Rico's liberation struggle. She led multifaceted efforts that resulted in the recognition of Puerto Rico's colonial status at international conferences in Egypt, Ghana, and Cuba. At the same time that she was spearheading this diplomatic work, Cordero was infusing her medical research, writing, teaching, and practice with anti-imperialist and community-based perspectives that should be considered part of her contributions as a decolonial worker as well. Cordero was a colonized subject traveling across landscapes undergoing political transformation in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. Each location she inhabited revealed to her new possibilities for solidarity, making her into an ever-stronger weapon in the struggle for Puerto

Rican liberation. Cordero's efforts between 1954 and 1966 created bridges that placed Puerto Rico's struggle firmly and visibly upon a global stage.

Cold War Contexts

Cordero's international advocacy on behalf of Puerto Rico took place during an increasingly fraught period of the Cold War. The Cold War was the twentieth century power struggle between the capitalist (Western Bloc) and communist (Eastern Bloc) segments of the world, with one of the more recognizable conflicts being the one between the United States and the Soviet Union. Thus, some historians identify the 1947 passage of the Truman Doctrine—a United States policy principle that promised aid to countries threatened by Soviet control—as the beginning of the Cold War. Meanwhile, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 has been understood as the end of the Cold War. This was a tense time in global history marked by scares such as the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, when the United States discovered Soviet-supplied missiles on Cuba, located only ninety miles away from Florida.² The United States dedicated substantial resources to combating and containing communism around the world, and especially within its vicinity. During the Cold War, the United States invaded various Caribbean and Latin American countries, toppling governments that they viewed as too communist or leftist, and supporting leaders with an interest in capitalist development who helped the United States maintain its sphere of influence.³

The Eastern and Western Blocs competed for the allegiance of nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Capitalist and communist countries alike were interested in the human and

² See Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, and Westad, *The Global Cold War*.

³ Such as Guatemala in 1954, the Dominican Republic in 1965, Operation Condor in the southern cone of South America throughout the 1970s, and Grenada in 1980. See Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop*.

natural resources of the “colonial and ex-colonial segments” of the world. The communist system attracted the attention of oppressed communities, as well as nations that were attempting to develop themselves in the wake of independence or revolution. During the Cold War, communism gained traction in places such as Algeria, Vietnam, Korea, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Black Harlem. However, ideological differences between the Soviet Union and China, at the time the two largest communist states in the world, led to the Sino-Soviet split.⁴ This meant that in addition to contending with capitalist powers, the Soviet Union and China had to contend with each other as they sought to build ideological and economic alliances.

For the Third World, the Cold War competition between capitalist and communist countries for resources and dominance reeked of imperialism. Although they did still receive various forms of aid from the Soviet Union and China, leaders of African and Asian nations began to organize collectives that bypassed the existing world powers and offered an alternative to the Cold War paradigm.⁵ The Afro-Asian movement is one of the earliest examples from the era of such a collective. The Afro-Asian movement’s Cold War roots can be traced to the Bandung Conference of 1955, which took place in Bandung, Indonesia.⁶ The main countries organizing the conference were Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and India. The conference brought together representatives from twenty-nine countries in Africa and Asia, many

⁴ For more on the organizing implications of the Sino-Soviet split see, Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1988).

⁵ Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1988), 69.

⁶ For more on the Bandung Conference see Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007). The Bandung conference is the first Third World initiative of the Cold War that Prashad discusses.

of which had recently become independent. The aim of this conference was to foster Afro-Asian economic cooperation and oppose colonialism.⁷

The Bandung Conference was the predecessor of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded as an organization in Yugoslavia in 1956.⁸ The leaders involved in the organization's founding were Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Sukarno of Indonesia, Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt, and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The movement sought to create an alliance of developing nations that could work together without aligning themselves with either the Eastern or Western bloc. The NAM had its first conference in 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.⁹

An important source of membership and vision for the Afro-Asian and Non-Aligned movements were the Pan-African movements that preceded the Cold War.¹⁰ Pan-African and Afro-diasporic initiatives such as Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association provided an ideological and infrastructural foundations on which subsequent Third World movements could depend.¹¹ A defining moment of the Pan-African movement that impacted

⁷ Prashad, *The Darker Nations*.

⁸ Prashad, *The Darker Nations*.

⁹ Prashad, *The Darker Nations*.

¹⁰ For a general overview of Afro-diasporic movements in the twentieth century see, Robin D. G. Kelley, "How the West Was One: The African Diaspora and the Re-Mapping of U.S. History," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

¹¹ See John Henrik Clarke, editor, with Amy Jacques Garvey, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974); Adam Ewing, *The Age of Garvey: How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Amy Jacques Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (London: Collier and MacMillan, 1963, 1968); Frank Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Claudrena Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942* (Routledge, 2007); Robert A. Hill, editor, *Marcus Garvey, Life and Lessons: A Centennial Companion to the Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London, UK: Verso, 1998); Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: a short political guide* (Praeger, 1976); and Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots*

Cold War era organizing was the first Pan-African Congress, which took place in France in 1919, and was organized by W.E.B. Du Bois and Ida Gibbs Hunt.¹² Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore (a Pan-Africanist and writer from Trinidad) organized the Fifth Pan-African Congress, which took place in Manchester, England in 1945.¹³ This Congress brought together black leaders from the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean such as Du Bois, Jomo Kenyatta, and C.L.R. James, and it promoted an agenda that was anti-colonial, socialist, and envisioned a United States of Africa.¹⁴ Du Bois spent his final years in Ghana during the period when Nkrumah was president and worked to implement the ideas discussed in the Pan-African Congresses. Although the independence of Ghana in 1957 promoted a wave of Pan-Africanist organizing, the work was a continuation of efforts (by many of the same people) that had begun before the Cold War.

The Cuban Revolution accelerated conversations within the Afro-Asian coalition about how to more fully include the Caribbean and Latin America in the Non-Aligned Movement.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara invested a significant amount of time and resources into building with Afro-Asian nations. From June to September of 1959, Guevara visited Egypt,

Garveyism: the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the rural South, 1920-1927 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹² For more on Du Bois, see David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The fight for equality and the American century, 1919-1963*, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001). For more on early twentieth century Afro-diasporic organizing, see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹³ For more on Nkrumah's experiences in the United Kingdom and the United States, see John Henrik Clarke, "Kwame Nkrumah: His Years in America," in *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Black Politics 1974 (October 1974), pp. 9-16.

¹⁴ For more on the 1945 Pan-African Congress see, Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (New Beacon Books, 3rd edition, 1995).

¹⁵ See Charles Neuhauser, *Third World Politics: China and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, 1957-1967* (Harvard University Asia Center, 1968).

Sudan, Morocco, Yugoslavia, Indonesia, India, Burma, Ceylon, Japan, and Pakistan, and by 1961, Cuba was sending aid to Algerians in support of their revolution.¹⁶ At the NAM's first conference in 1961, Cuba was the only country from Latin America whose delegates were recognized as representatives (although Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador were observers). However, by the end of 1960, Castro had firmly affiliated himself and his government with the Soviet Union.¹⁷

As will become evident throughout this chapter, Cordero expended a significant amount of intellectual and physical labor situating Puerto Rico's liberation struggle within this complex and shifting Cold War context. Her activism, as well as the activism of other Puerto Rican activists during this time, contrasted with the approach taken by Cuba. Given their focus on achieving self-determination, Puerto Rican activists such as Cordero and Narciso Rabell Martínez expand and also complicate narratives detailing the growing presence of the Caribbean and Latin America in Third World solidarity building in the twentieth century.¹⁸

Cordero's Influence on the Life and Work of Julian Mayfield

There is a growing amount of interest in, and research on, Julian Mayfield, but published scholarship does not adequately address his relationship with Cordero, and the influence that

¹⁶ Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa*, 65-66; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 31.

¹⁷ Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa*, 105.

¹⁸ For more on this Third World, Tricontinental solidarity building, see Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, *The Sixties Papers*; Samantha Christiansen and Zachary Scarlett, eds. *The Third World in the Global 1960s*; Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*; Van Gosse, *The Movements of the New Left, 1950-1975*; Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*; Besenia Rodriguez, "De la Esclavitud Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana"; Nico Slate, *Black Power beyond Border*; Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*; Cynthia A. Young *Soul Power*.

they had on each other.¹⁹ Cordero and Mayfield's relationship is indicative of leftist circulatory routes that existed between Puerto Rico and the United States during the early Cold War. The intimate ways in which Cordero and Mayfield developed a shared anticolonial and antiracist vision demonstrates the way in which international solidarity is built on an individual scale.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Mayfield was in New York City acting, as well as writing, directing, and producing off-Broadway plays. Mayfield was a member of the Committee for the Negro in the Arts, "which fought racial discrimination in the theater," as well as the Harlem Writer's Guild, "along with Maya Angelou, John Henrik Clarke, John Oliver Killens, and Sarah Wright all of whom shared a politics of leftist internationalism and southern origins in Jim Crow terror."²⁰ Although Mayfield was initially a part of the Communist Party during this time, he eventually left the organization. As the scholar Mary Helen Washington writes, "Like many other black leftists...Mayfield left the Party because he felt that his black nationalism would always exist in uneasy tension with his leftist affiliations, and he felt compelled to switch his energies and loyalties to black struggles."²¹

It was at around this time Mayfield and Cordero met at a party, which gestures towards the role that social gatherings play in connecting like-minded individuals.²² During the period,

¹⁹ Scholars such as Kevin Gaines, Dayo Gore, Peniel Joseph, Mary Helen Washington, and Jonathan Munby mention Cordero in their writings about Mayfield, but usually only in passing, and without any sort of analysis of how his relationship with Cordero shaped his Black radical perspective. An exception is the work of David Tyroler Romine, a PhD candidate at Duke University whose dissertation focuses on Julian Mayfield. See Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*; Dayo Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*; Lawrence P. Jackson, *The Indignant Generation: A Narrative History of African American Writers and Critics* (Princeton University Press, 2011); Peniel Joseph, *Waiting for the Midnight Hour*; Jonathan Munby, *Under a Bad Sign: Criminal Self-Representation in African American Popular Culture* (The University of Chicago Press, 2011); Mary Helen Washington, *The Other Blacklist*.

²⁰ Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 144.

²¹ Mary Helen Washington, *The Other Blacklist*, 270.

²² Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Mayfield was active in communist party activities, and in an unpublished autobiography, he described the context in which he met the woman who would become his wife: “It was at a party at an actor friend’s house on 98th street and Central Park West. I don’t know how the actors got mixed up with the writers that night as we usually did not run in the same circles.”²³ What is curious is that Mayfield pointed out how strange it was for actors and writers to be in the same circles, but he did not mention how strange it was for a doctor to be in the mix as well. It is likely that the reason these people were at the same party was because they shared a common political perspective that built off the communist focus on internationalism and class solidarity, but which also paid attention to race and colonialism.

Interestingly, despite the post-World War II growth of New York City’s Puerto Rican population, Mayfield wrote that he could not “remember meeting any” Puerto Ricans before Cordero.²⁴ Mayfield’s lack of awareness regarding Puerto Rico is curious, given that Mayfield was politically active by the time he met Cordero, traversing the neighborhoods where Puerto Ricans would have lived. This is evidence of the early invisibility of the Puerto Rican community, and could likely be explained by the way Puerto Ricans may have been confused with other groups, such as Italians.²⁵ Soon after meeting Cordero, Mayfield was able to meet another Puerto Rican. Doña Vivi visited Cordero and Mayfield in New York City and Mayfield captured the rebellious spirit of his future mother-in-law:

Doña Vivi is quite a vivacious and active woman and she was concerned about her daughter’s first marriage, which was on the rocks; she wanted to do all she could to patch

²³ Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

²⁴ Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

²⁵ For an account of the tense relations between these ethnic groups in the mid-twentieth century New York City landscape, see Piri Thomas’s autobiography, *Down These Mean Streets* (New York: Knopf, 1967).

it up. I was of course no help here as Doña Vivi had arrived too late and I was no factor in the break-up of Ana Livia's marriage. I took both of them to see the movie, *South of the A*, a picture that had been produced by progressives about the strike of the (silver-mine) workers in New Mexico. Doña Vivi became so involved in the movie...²⁶

In a short period, Mayfield had not only met Puerto Ricans, but he began to be exposed to the political beliefs of Puerto Ricans. He would soon realize that Puerto Ricans had reason to be passionate about organizing and the rights of workers.

After getting to know Cordero and her mother on a political level, Mayfield wrote, "We were in harmony politically and I saw no real reason why we should not get married."²⁷

However, Mayfield was critiqued for his relationship with Cordero. Mayfield wrote, "when we announced our intention to get married, hardly a soul in either her world or mine approved...late in the spring of '54 I boarded an airplane bound for an island I had hardly thought of a few weeks before."²⁸ Mayfield recounted that his friends expressed disapproval because they thought Mayfield was "copping out of the class struggle because we had decided to live in Puerto Rico while she finished her training."²⁹ This concern that moving to Puerto Rico meant abandoning the class struggle revealed one of the uninformed biases that Cordero fought against throughout her life. Living in Puerto Rico was an eye-opening experience for Mayfield that increased his awareness of the how the class struggles in Puerto Rico and the United States were intertwined. It is also possible that some of the resistance that Mayfield faced was because his relationship with Cordero visually looked like an interracial alliance during an era of legalized

²⁶ Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

²⁷ Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

²⁸ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

²⁹ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

racial segregation. Despite the opposition, the couple married on November 6, 1954, in Santurce, Puerto Rico.

It is worth noting here that Mayfield's years of living in Puerto Rico operated as a sort of self-imposed exile. The writer's group of the Committee for the Negro in the Arts, of which Mayfield was a part, was disbanded because of anticommunist repression.³⁰ Thus, Mayfield's first experience of exile during Cold War era repression in the United States was not in 1961, when he and Cordero fled to Ghana. Six years before Mayfield visited Cuba, and seven years before he moved to Ghana, he was exposed to the realities of colonial and racial oppression outside of the United States. Mayfield's trip to Puerto Rico reinserts Puerto Rico as an important site in which the political consciousness of leftists was formed during the era of international solidarity.³¹

Cordero was part of an extended leftist community on the island, a fact that Mayfield quickly became aware of. Mayfield spent his first night in Puerto Rico with "radical friends of Ana Livia's. Two days later there was a general roundup of political dissenters of all kinds, and most of the people I had met that night were locked up in La Princesa prison in old San Juan."³² Indeed, a FBI Intelligence Report from October 1954 notes that Cordero was working to organize a committee to defend eleven arrested leaders of the Partido Comunista Puertorriqueño

³⁰ Gaines, *American Africans*, 144.

³¹ Other United States-based leftists and communists, such as the Marxist evolutionary biologist Richard Levins and the southern organizer Jane Speed, also moved to Puerto Rico during the 1950s. Both were married to Puerto Rican leftists (Levins was with Rosario Morales and Speed was with Cesar Andreu Iglesias), but their moves were also politically motivated. In the case of Levins, he moved to Puerto Rico from New York with Morales in order to avoid the Korean War draft. Richard Levins, interview by Sandy Placido in Cambridge, MA, May 13, 2013.

³² Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

(the Puerto Rican Communist Party).³³ Mayfield himself was tracked by federal agents in Puerto Rico, due to his and Cordero's affiliation with communists on the island.³⁴ Mayfield wrote of police surveillance on the island following the 1954 attack by Puerto Rican nationalists on the United States Congress building and on the Governor's mansion in San Juan. He explained that the Puerto Rican government had "what is probably the worst intelligence service in the Western World...their method was to lock everybody up, communists, nationalists, socialists alike, anybody who doesn't like the government."³⁵ Mayfield realized that the level of oppression in Puerto Rico was quite high, and that it affected a population that had fewer resources than leftists in the United States. He noted,

The difference (in those days) between U.S. radicals and those in the Caribbean and Latin America was that nearly everyone in the latter group had been in prison several times...unlike their Yankee counterparts, most Latin American revolutionaries do not expect their relatives and comrades to knock themselves out raising bail to get them out of prison.³⁶

Mayfield came to understand that, when compared to radicals in the United States, radicals in the Caribbean and Latin America fought despite more repression and fewer economic resources.

Once in Puerto Rico, Mayfield identified manifestations of United States imperialism on the island. After traveling through Puerto Rico for work, he wrote,

In this way I saw most of the towns on the island, and poverty on a level I had never imagined while I lived in the United States. As a soldier I had trudged the back streets of Oahu in the Hawaiian [sic] Islands, but there had been no place like El Fanguito where people live in huts on stilts above greenish, brackish swamp and mud; no place like a slum edge of Caguas where pretty

³³ "Weekly Intelligence Summary, October 27, 1954, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands," *FBI Files on Puerto Ricans*, accessed at <http://www.pr-secretfiles.net/>. Find Cordero's name under the section entitled "Thematic Index," and download the PDF entitled SJ-100-3_49_049_184.pdf. [this website is no longer available].

³⁴ Gaines, *American Africans*, 145.

³⁵ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

³⁶ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

little black and brown-eyes kids romped ankle-deep in the open drainage which ran past their front doors after a heavy rain fall.³⁷

Mayfield's experiences in Puerto Rico were beyond anything he could have imagined while living in the United States, and worse than his experience in another one of the United States's imperial outposts while he was a soldier.

The quality of life Mayfield experienced in Puerto Rico did not just put the island on the map, so to speak, but it helped him understand the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, and its connections to racism. Mayfield arrived at the conclusion that "the island is a semi-colony" because "it has no control over its foreign affairs, only a single representative in the Congress of the United States who has no vote, and the decisions of the islands highest court may be reversed by the U.S. Federal District Court in Boston."³⁸ Mayfield explained how colonialism in Puerto Rico was masked, operating through "flunkies" at the local level. He also hinted at the way that political organizers did not communicate well with "ordinary folk."³⁹ In addition, Mayfield accused Puerto Ricans of a higher class and education status of circumventing, and benefiting from, the colonial relationship, instead of seeking to change it. If it weren't for their alternative politics and awareness of Puerto Rico's colonial dilemma, it was as if Mayfield was describing people like Cordero and her parents when he wrote, "the educated, mobile middle class, which shuttles back and forth to the United States and

³⁷ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

³⁸ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

³⁹ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Europe, can shut its eyes to colonial-imperialist relationships between his country and Washington.”⁴⁰

There were several more injustices in Puerto Rico that Mayfield recognized and wrote about. With regards to the military and war, Mayfield wrote that more “Puerto Rican young men have been killed in the Korean and Vietnam wars than any other ethnic group under the U.S. flag (Black Americans run them a close second).”⁴¹ Mayfield also noted the economic injustice faced by the island in terms of trade and its sugar industry: “the island has one principal crop, sugar, which it cannot sell on the world market, but only to the United States.”⁴² Mayfield highlighted ignorance and the failure of trickle-down economics when he described tourists who “bring only dollars, ignorance and racism—and the dollars don’t go very far down the ladder,” land ownership by foreigners, the treatment of Puerto Ricans as “third-class” citizens, and cultural imperialism (“our own youth—under constant bombardment from the enemy’s TV, movies, pop culture, dress and life styles.”).⁴³ Given all this, Mayfield questioned whether the “new supermarkets, broad highways and luxury hotels” could be equated with “progress.”⁴⁴ Mayfield was mapping out the ways that injustices in Puerto Rico aligned with, but also went beyond, what was faced by African Americans in the United States. It is interesting to note that throughout

⁴⁰ Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁴¹ Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁴² Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁴³ Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁴⁴ Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Mayfield's observations, he used the word "our," indicating the deep connection he felt to the island after his time there.

Mayfield's time in Puerto Rico was also a major boost for his professional life. When describing the summer before he met Cordero, Mayfield wrote, "Some time that summer I decided it was time I got married and settled down. I was not fulfilling my promise to write the great novel or the great play, and this was proved by the fact that I had only written poems, short stories and one-act plays."⁴⁵ Mayfield thought that getting married would help him focus, increasing his productivity. Indeed, during the four years he lived in Puerto Rico with Cordero, from 1954 to 1958, Mayfield was able to complete a large amount of writing. He wrote two television dramas, three novels and started a fourth, three of which were eventually published.⁴⁶ Mayfield's first two novels, *The Hit* (1957) and *The Long Night* (1958), were "well-received sketches of Harlem life."⁴⁷ Cordero also connected Mayfield with her friend, Eliezer Curet, "the junior partner in a market survey firm" who gave Mayfield a job "supervising teams of students who went from house to house sampling the popularity of each radio station."⁴⁸

Mayfield's 1957 and 1958 novels convey what would have been his newfound awareness of the presence and influence of Puerto Ricans in New York City. In *The Long Night*, Mayfield included a line that indicates the connections he was making between African Americans and Puerto Ricans. He wrote,

⁴⁵ Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁴⁶ "Biographical Sketch," in *Finding Aid for Julian Mayfield Papers, 1949-1984*. Accessed at <http://www.nypl.org/ead/3813#id3595918>.

⁴⁷ Gaines, *American Africans*, 144.

⁴⁸ Julian Mayfield, "La Borinqueña," box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

“Well, now, son, I’ll tell you,” the other began as though he had given the question a great deal of thought. “The Italians is rough, the Jews is smart, and the Irish is dumb, but they all manage to get along—”

“The Negroes and the Puerto Ricans must be the dumbest,” interrupted the plump man, “because they ain’t getting along at all.”⁴⁹

The first character makes the point that despite their differences, Italians, Jews, and Irish people “manage to get along.”⁵⁰ The plump man responds by pointing out how dumb it is for the Negro and Puerto Rican community to be divided. These lines indicate that Mayfield was thinking about the racial unifications and divisions that were prevalent in the United States during the time he was writing. He was surely discussing these issues with Cordero, since she also wrote about unity amongst white groups and divisions amongst people of color.⁵¹

There are other lines in the book that give a sense of the mixed culture in East Harlem, and the presence of Puerto Ricans. For example, Mayfield captures the variety of foods that the main character Steely smells as he runs through the market on 116th Street and Park Avenue: “As Steely ran, the smells changed swiftly from crated cabbage and collard greens and damp kale to frying fish and pork chops and *cuchifritos*.”⁵² Mayfield also conveyed the violence caused by these cultural, racial, and ethnic juxtapositions when he wrote, “On the previous morning two boys had fought over a girl at a soda fountain on Ninety-sixth Street. That would have been the

⁴⁹ Julian Mayfield, *The Long Night* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, [1958] 1989), 79.

⁵⁰ For more on European ethnic solidarities and the construction of whiteness, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁵¹ In the letter Cordero wrote to Malcolm X in 1964, she stated, “White Americans attempt to divide us by telling the Puerto Rican that he is closest to being white and so, superior; and the Afro-American that he is closest to being American and so, superior. They thus utilize national chauvinism and racism to separate us when these facts should instead bring us closer together.” Ana Livia Cordero to Malcolm X, August 25, 1964, box 14, folder 2, Malcolm X papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁵² Mayfield, *The Long Night*, 32.

end of it had one of the boys not been white and the other Puerto Rican.”⁵³ And when describing the “Supreme Council of The Comanche Raiders” the senior members of the gang of which Steely is a part, he describes one of the boys in this way:

Tommy Morales had a Puerto Rican mother, spoke Spanish perfectly, and was one of the reasons for the troubled peace that presently existed between The Comanche Raiders and their East Harlem neighbors, The Conquistadores. These four boys determined policy for the Raiders. They had grown up in the neighborhood and were as much a part of the landscape as the red brick of the buildings and the battered trash cans chained to the fences.⁵⁴

This passage is significant not only because it demonstrates the role played by Tommy in brokering peace between rival groups in East Harlem, but because it also explains how Tommy, as a Puerto Rican, had roots in East Harlem which were just as deep as other members of the gang. Thus, Mayfield went from not knowing any Puerto Ricans in New York City, to acknowledging, in his writing, how integral they were to this urban space.

In terms of family life, Cordero’s first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage.⁵⁵ Finally, on April 22, 1957, their first son, Rafael Ariel, was born. Mayfield’s parents, Hudson and Annie Mae Mayfield, visited Puerto Rico in August of 1957 to see their grandson.⁵⁶ That Mayfield’s parents—working-class African Americans from the United States south—traveled to Puerto Rico in the late 1950s is another example of the connections between African American and Puerto Rican communities on both the island and the mainland during this period. Not only did Mayfield’s parents visit Puerto Rico during a particularly repressive time during United States

⁵³ Mayfield, *The Long Night*, 105.

⁵⁴ Mayfield, *The Long Night*, 42.

⁵⁵ Nilda Cordero, interview by Rafael Mayfield in Puerto Rico, July 20, 2013.

⁵⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Cordero photographs. MC 824, PD.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

history and the Cold War, but they also interacted with some of the leading Puerto Rican radical activists of the time.

There is a photo taken during the trip Mayfield's parents took to Puerto Rico.⁵⁷ Mayfield's mother is in the center, Cordero is kneeling, Mayfield is peeking from the back right, and Cesar Andreu Iglesias and Jane Speed are on the left side of the photograph. Andreu Iglesias was one of the most important labor organizers on the island, especially during the 1930s, and his wife Jane Speed was a radical bookstore owner from Alabama, who moved to the island along with her mother.⁵⁸ This photograph is representative of the ways that personal and political relationships intertwine for activists, a reminder that their lives are not monolithic and centered solely on organizing.

During this period, Cordero and Mayfield interacted with another radical, intercultural couple. Rosario Morales, a Puerto Rican New Yorker who would become a poet and writer, and her husband Richard Levins, a Marxist evolutionary biologist, also lived in the Naranjito area. In an interview with Levins, he explained that he and Morales decided to live Puerto Rico so that he could avoid the Korean War draft.⁵⁹ Levins remembers meeting Cordero and Mayfield during this time, and he remembers that they met via Andreu Iglesias and Speed. Indeed, there are police surveillance files from the period which describe the way the police viewed the activities of Cordero and her associates during the years they lived in Naranjito:

Sr. Antonio Padilla Morales, Agricultor...6 de abril de 1956...que tiene una casa en el barrio Achote y se la tiene alquilada hace como 8 meses a los esposos Julian Mayfield y Ana Libia

⁵⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Ana Livia Cordero photographs. MC 824, PD.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁸ For more on Andreu Iglesias and Speed, as well as another intercultural couple from the period who also lived in the central part of the island during the 1950s, Richard Levins and Rosario Morales, see Aurora Levins Morales, "Dick and Jane: A Solidarity Primer," <http://www.auroralevinsmorales.com/main-blog/dick-and-jane-a-solidarity-primer>, August 1, 2016. Accessed February 27, 2017.

⁵⁹ Richard Levins, interview with Sandy Placido in Cambridge, MA, May 13, 2013.

Cordero. Le consta de propio conocimiento que éstos son visitados con frecuencia por César Andreu Iglesias y Jane Speed, estos últimos dos son comunistas.⁶⁰

De acuerdo con informacion obtenida por el Cabo Luis A. Ramos, este informa que la Doctora Ana Livia Cordero, quien trabaja en el Hospital Municipal de esta población, recibe visitas de personas sospechosas en su casa del Bo. Achiote de Naranjito, P.R. Ha sido visto en dicha casa el líder Comunista Cesar Andreu Iglesias; también es visitado por un matrimonio continental, el blanco y la esposa de color, así como por varias otras personas sospechosas.⁶¹

(Mr. Antonio Padilla Morales, Farmer ... April 6, 1956 ... who has a house in the Achiote district and has been rented for 8 months to the husbands Julian Mayfield and Ana Libia Cordero. It is his own knowledge that they are frequently visited by César Andreu Iglesias and Jane Speed, the latter two are Communists.

According to information obtained by Cabo Luis A. Ramos, the latter reports that Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, who works at the Municipal Hospital in this town, receives visits from suspects at her home in the Bo. Achiote de Naranjito, P.R. The Communist leader Cesar Andreu Iglesias has been seen in the house; Is also visited by a continental couple, white and wife of color, as well as by several other suspicious persons.)

It is possible that the police were referring to Levins and Morales when describing a “continental marriage” that was interacting with the other interracial and intercultural couples in Naranjito.

Throughout their reports, the police repeatedly describe Andreu Iglesias, Speed, and Cordero as communists. Although I have no evidence that Cordero was an official member of the Communist Party, by the late 1950s, Cordero had certainly immersed herself in communist circles in Puerto Rico and New York City, associations which very likely influenced her political perspective. In a written communication with me, Levins made sure to emphasize the role of the Communist Party ideology in shaping activists of the period. He wrote, “Our approach to solidarity was communist-inspired. I think it was the third Congress of the Comintern that pushed US communists toward anti-racist and anti-colonialist politics. Some reference to the

⁶⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Police surveillance, April 12, 1956. MC 824, 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Police surveillance, April 2, 1956. MC 824, 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

common ideology of many of your protagonists would help to make sense of their politics.”⁶²

Although communism did eventually embrace an anti-racist and anti-colonial approach, part of what this chapter is arguing is that for Puerto Ricans and African Americans such as Cordero and Mayfield, their experiences as racialized and colonized bodies made it so that an anti-racist and anti-colonial approach would have developed, almost out of necessity, before their exposure to the Communist Party.

Despite the influence that Cordero had on his life, Mayfield did not write much about Cordero. Other than his dedication to Ana Livia in his novel, *The Long Night*, there is a fifteen-page, handwritten reflection entitled “La Borinqueña” (which can refer to both a Puerto Rican woman, and the island of Puerto Rico). The latest date mentioned in this piece is 1968.⁶³ In his unpublished autobiography, a chapter with this same name (although misspelled as “La Barin Queña,” indicating that perhaps this was an earlier version of the handwritten piece), is mysteriously missing all but the first page.⁶⁴ And in résumés and short autobiographical pieces that he wrote, Mayfield would mention his time in Puerto Rico, but he did not usually mention that he was there with or because of Cordero.⁶⁵ Still, Cordero and Puerto Rico had a profound impact on Mayfield’s political and personal life. In the years after Mayfield and Cordero separated in 1966, Mayfield continued to write to his mother-in-law in Spanish (and Doña Viví

⁶² Richard Levins, email communication with Sandy Placido, January 24, 2013.

⁶³ Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” box 1, folder 12, Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁶⁴ Julian Mayfield papers, box 15, folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁶⁵ Julian Mayfield papers, Box 1, folders 1 and 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

made sure to send him Puerto Rican avocados and rum), visit Puerto Rico, and speak to his sons about events on the island.⁶⁶

Cordero's Cuban Solidarities

In July 1960, Cordero and Mayfield traveled to Cuba with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC). Robert Taber, the journalist who visited Fidel Castro and his guerrilla army in the Sierra Maestra mountains in the late 1950s, founded the FPCC in the spring of 1960. One of the FPCC's primary goals was to counter anti-Cuban sentiment.⁶⁷ The FPCC joined people from all over the world who traveled to Cuba in order to celebrate the anniversary of the revolutionary actions of the 26th of July Movement.⁶⁸ Cordero's involvement in the trip pushes us to think about the implications of the Cuban revolution, especially within a Caribbean context. Cuba's revolution deeply inspired Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rico's pro-independence organization, the Movimiento Pro Independencia, or MPI, was founded shortly after Fidel Castro rose to power. Meanwhile, Puerto Rico's ongoing colonial status was a concern for Cubans. Analyzing Cordero's participation in both a United States-based and Puerto Rican delegation to Cuba broadens our understanding of the type of solidarity that coalesced around Cuba in the post-1959 period.

Although members of the FPCC sympathized with the Cuban revolution, the official, diplomatic relationship between the United States and Cuba was still unclear. This tentativeness was related to whether or not, within the Cold War context, the Soviet Union would support

⁶⁶ Julian Mayfield papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

⁶⁷ Van Gosse, *Where the boys are: Cuba, Cold War America and the making of a New Left* (London; New York: Verso, 1993), 138-140.

⁶⁸ The 26th of July Movement was the name of the revolutionary group that overthrew the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. The group was led by Fidel Castro, and its name was a reference to the failed attack on the Moncada Barracks on July 26, 1953.

Cuba. The Cubans also had reason to be hesitant, given that the United States was complicit in supporting the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who was in power from 1952 to 1959.⁶⁹

Although the fates of Cuba and the United States were intimately related even before 1898, Castro hoped that the revolution would stem the meddling from the United States.⁷⁰ However, given geopolitical forces such as physical proximity to the United States, and Cuba's dependence, as an island, on alliances with nations with more resources, this type of isolationism was not entirely possible. Both the United States and Cuba eyed each other warily following the revolution, determining what the next steps could be.

The United States preferred that Cuba remain within its purview.⁷¹ However, Castro began to take actions that were not acceptable to its neighbor in the north. Castro moved forward on land reforms that negatively affected United States investors, and by early 1960, he made an agreement to trade sugar for Russian oil.⁷² The United States realized that Castro was not going to be the ally they had envisioned and they aggressively began a campaign to overthrow him. Revolution in the shadow of empire was conditional, a lesson that would have been familiar for Puerto Rican freedom fighters such as Cordero.

In addition to being a member of the FPCC delegation, Cordero affiliated herself with the delegation of prominent Puerto Rican *independentistas* who arrived in Cuba in July of 1960. During one of the ceremonies, Cordero and other prominent MPI members marched across a

⁶⁹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 13.

⁷⁰ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 12.

⁷¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 14.

⁷² "Khrushchev and Eisenhower trade threats over Cuba," *This Day in History: July 9, 1960* on History.com. Accessed at <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/khrushchev-and-eisenhower-trade-threats-over-cuba>

stage carrying a banner that said, “Long Live Free Puerto Rico.” According to a Claridad article that reported on the event,

The Puerto Rican delegation was deliriously applauded by the vast crowd of more than a million people shouting: 'Puerto Rico, Freedom!' while Prime Minister Fidel Castro, President of the Republic Oswaldo Dorticos, and the other leaders of the Revolution applauded our delegates.⁷³

This represents a significant moment of solidarity during the 1960 celebration of the Cuban revolution. Cuba’s revolutionary leaders as well as audience members from all over the world expressed their support for Puerto Rico’s freedom. Cordero’s work led to increased recognition and support of the Puerto Rican struggle.

Cordero’s participation in both the Puerto Rican and African American delegations made her an embodied link that pulled the Puerto Rican, Cuban, and African American struggles closer together. It seems likely that Cordero stood out in both delegations, given the insights she would have had based on her extensive experience in both the United States and Puerto Rico. After having studied and worked in New York City throughout the 1950s, her understanding of the transnational and two sided nature of racism and imperialism was likely longer-standing than that of other participants on the trip.

From North Carolina to Ghana: A migrating colonial subject

The FPCC trip to Cuba was also significant to the history of solidarity between Latin America, Africa, and the United States in that it connected Cordero and Mayfield to Robert F. Williams. Because they helped Williams flee the United States following racial conflicts in North Carolina, Cordero and Mayfield decided to leave the country as well, traveling first to England, then to Ghana. As a migrating colonial subject, Cordero’s experiences of economic and

⁷³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Claridad article, 1960. MC 824, folder 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

cultural exploitation at the hands of the United States surely made her hyper-aware of colonial oppression elsewhere. After crossing the Atlantic for the first time in 1961, Cordero found herself in an African country that was four years into experiencing what it meant to be at least nominally independent, sorting through what they wanted to keep, discard, and acquire after half a century of British political rule. Cordero's status as a colonial subject in a place where meanings and experiences of freedom, liberation, self-sufficiency, self-determination, and independence were still being sorted out gave her a particular perspective. In other words, as a person with an urgent and personal interest in the decolonization of her people, she would have viewed the changes taking place beneath her feet not only with heightened attentiveness, but with an eye towards how what she was learning could be applied to the Puerto Rican struggle.

In 1960, Robert F. Williams came under violent attack. Williams was the chair of the Monroe, North Carolina chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the editor of the weekly newsletter the *Crusader*, and the originator of armed self-defense groups in Monroe that could stand up to white terrorism. Late in the summer of 1961, Williams welcomed into his home seventeen Freedom Riders just released from prison. The presence of these Freedom Riders in Monroe led to a mob of white people attacking blacks at a demonstration. When a white couple accidentally wandered into Monroe's black community, Williams took them into his home for protection, and for this he was charged with kidnapping.⁷⁴

Cordero and Mayfield helped Robert Williams and his family as they escaped, which led to their own departure from the United States. Mayfield was working as a journalist for the Pittsburgh *Courier* and the Baltimore *Afro-American* after returning from Puerto Rico, and he

⁷⁴ Rodriguez, "De la Esclavitud Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana," 80.

was in Monroe covering the uprising.⁷⁵ Cordero—who was in New York City with their oldest son—and Mayfield used their contacts along the east coast in order to assist Williams and his family as they fled from North Carolina to Canada. A few months later, in October 1961, Cordero, Mayfield, and their oldest son Rafael made their way to England. Cordero was eight months pregnant with her second child, Emiliano. The family departed London and made various stops on small, loud, and shaky planes before finally arriving in Accra. Once in Ghana, their connections with militant African American and diasporic anticolonial struggles would continue.

Those who decided to resettle in Ghana were excited to live in a country that was considered “a bastion of revolutionary and socialist hopes.”⁷⁶ Ghana became independent in 1957, and Kwame Nkrumah was the country’s first leader. Nkrumah became a proponent of Pan-Africanism, after studying in the United States and being influenced by thinkers such as W.E.B. Du Bois. Nkrumah welcomed members of the African diaspora back to Ghana to aid in its development. Although expatriates in Ghana were part of a hopeful and evolving post-colonial process, they faced challenges due to their status as outsiders.

Between Cordero’s time in university in the mid 1940s, and the end of her residency in hospitals in New York City in the late 1950s, a staggering number of countries in Africa had gained their independence. By 1960, while the Cuban revolution was still sending shockwaves throughout the Western hemisphere, sixteen countries in Africa gained their independence from France, Britain, and Belgium.⁷⁷ It seems certain that the liberation of African nations would have been on Cordero’s mind as she considered the Puerto Rican situation amidst the excitement of

⁷⁵ Rodriguez, “De la Esclavitud Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana,” 70.

⁷⁶ Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 141.

⁷⁷ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 5.

the new Cuban society. Thus, not only Cuba, but also the newly liberated African nations became a point of reference for Cordero. Nations of the Third World looked towards each other during the Cold War for inspiration and assisted each other in material ways as their societies evolved.

Cordero and other activists would soon learn about the many discontents that an independent country faced in its early years. Countries that had replaced colonial leaders and gained independence still found themselves interacting with the former colonial power, especially for economic reasons. This is why people like Cordero were so important to the transition that had taken place in Ghana. Independence meant no longer being overly reliant on the metropole, and countries like Ghana sought technical support from specialists from other parts of the Third World. Cordero was a decolonial worker who contributed to Ghana's liberation process.

Ghanaians and other expatriates categorized Cordero in a variety of ways. Maya Angelou explained that Cordero was "treated as an African American although those of us who were there knew that...she was puertorriqueña."⁷⁸ Samuel Ofusu-Amaah, a Ghanaian doctor who worked with Cordero, stated that he "always thought of her as a white American."⁷⁹ Cordero's racial and national identity was not discerned or labeled in a typical way in the Ghanaian context. These interpellations provide a small window into the complexities of identity formation in Ghana for a white-presenting, fully bilingual, woman from the Hispanophone Caribbean, married to a Black American and working as a doctor.

⁷⁸ Maya Angelou, phone interview by Sandy Placido, June 15, 2011.

⁷⁹ Dr. Samuel Ofusu-Amaah, interview by Sandy Placido in Accra, Ghana, September 5, 2013.

Medical Work as Anticolonial Work

Cordero's medical work and writing while in Ghana should be considered part of her anticolonial stance, given her critiques of imposed medical standards, and the emphasis she placed on culturally sensitive, community-based medicine. During her time in Ghana, Cordero was involved in a variety of initiatives. Her primary role was working for the newly established National Institute of Health and Medical Research (NIHMR). The NIHMR, as Nkrumah envisioned it, was meant to mirror the National Institute of Health in the United States, and it was the first medical research institute of its kind in Ghana. The NIHMR employed people from Ghana and abroad. The head of the NIHMR was a South African doctor named Joseph Gillman. There was later some controversy surrounding Gillman and the beginnings of Ghana's medical school. Initially, twenty-five doctors from the United States were set to work at the school. However, Gillman feared that some of these doctors were working for the CIA, and he convinced Nkrumah not to hire them, bypassing approval from the relevant committees.⁸⁰ A Ghanaian doctor, Sodzi Sodzi-Tettey, in his account on the beginnings of the medical school explains,

things appeared to be on course till 1963 when Nkrumah suddenly abrogated the agreement for reasons which were described as political...Nkrumah is believed to have been influenced by a South African Physiologist, Dr. Gilman, who opined that Ghana had enough doctors to run its own school...it was also rumored that agents of the Central Intelligence Agency had infiltrated the ranks of the 25 American lecturers initially recruited to establish the school.⁸¹

Due to the tense, Cold War environment, Nkrumah and Gillman decided not to hire doctors from the United States due to their suspicion that these doctors were affiliated with the CIA.⁸²

⁸⁰ Dr. Fred Sai, interview by Sandy Placido in Accra, Ghana, September 4, 2013.

⁸¹ "Legon Teaching Hospital" by Dr. Sodzi Sodzi-Tettey. Accessed at <http://thechronicle.com.gh/legon-teaching-hospital/>

⁸² There is another account of this incident in the biography of Conor Cruise O'Brien, an Irish politician who, in 1962, was invited by Nkrumah and the Chancellor of the University of Ghana to be the Vice-Chancellor of the

Nkrumah moved forward with the development of the medical school, drawing from trusted resources (such as Cordero) already within Ghana.

While at the NIHMR, Cordero conducted studies on the health of women and their children, especially during the prenatal and neonatal stage. Cordero was one of the highest paid workers at the NIHMR, which demonstrates that she was a top member of the research team.⁸³ In addition to working as a professor at the medical school, she taught a Medical Sociology class at the University of Ghana. Cordero also ran the Jamestown clinic for women and children in Accra. Cordero brought her students to this clinic to give them a holistic, community based understanding of medical care. She immersed her students and post-graduates (people who had already studied medicine abroad, and were now receiving additional training in Ghana) into village settings, training them to diagnose and treat illnesses and conduct medical surveys. Some of Cordero's former students explained that she was the first person to bring their medical education out of the clinical setting and into the broader community, approaching it from a public health angle.⁸⁴ While in Ghana, Cordero also conducted volunteer medical work in rural settings. According to Maya Angelou, as well as the daughter of Efua Sutherland (a prominent Ghanaian dramatist), Cordero would organize trips to villages to vaccinate children. Angelou

university. The biography recounts, "Conor's position as chairman of the committee on the medical school was undercut by Dr. Joseph Gillman, a South African medical doctor, who was the director of the Ghana Institute of Health. He was ideologically opposed to any agreement with the government of the United States and, crucially, he had access to Dr. Nkrumah. The result was that in November 1963 the Cabinet (meaning, really, Nkrumah) decided that negotiations with the American authorities had to be terminated." Donald H. Akenson, *Conor: A Biography of Conor Cruise O'Brien* (Cornell University Press, 1994), 236.

⁸³ She had one of the highest original and revised salaries. Her original salary was 2,400 (pounds?), the same as her colleague Dr. Lutz. Dr. de Heer had a salary of 2,000, Dr. Basner had one of 1,450. The revised salaries were 1,200 for her and Lutz, 1,000 for de Heer, and 840 for Basner. Public Records and Archives Administration Department of Ghana, Reference Number GH/PRAAD/RG.11/1/293, 1961-1967, G.A.S. Medical Research (N.I.H.M.R. Institute).

⁸⁴ Dr. Samuel Ofusu-Amaah, interview by Sandy Placido in Accra, Ghana, September 5, 2013; Dr. Poku Nimo, interview by Sandy Placido in Accra, Ghana, September 17, 2013.

shared that she would clean the child's arm, Cordero would vaccinate, and Sutherland would note it down.⁸⁵

A significant anecdote regarding Cordero's time in Ghana is related to Maya Angelou's son, Guy. Guy, who was seventeen at the time, was involved in an accident shortly after arriving in Ghana. The doctors who initially treated him misdiagnosed his injury. It was Cordero who ordered that another set of X-rays be done, and that is when she realized that Guy had broken his neck.⁸⁶ Angelou was extremely appreciative of what Cordero had done. She credited Cordero with saving her son's life, and called her a sister-friend.⁸⁷

Cordero revealed her anticolonial approach to medicine in a medical journal article published while she was in Ghana entitled, "The Determination of Medical Care Needs in Relation to a Concept of Minimal Adequate Care." The article was published in the April-June 1964 issue of the British journal *Medical Care*, and it was based on the public health research Cordero had conducted in Puerto Rico in 1958, while living there with Mayfield. In the article, Cordero expressed her anti-colonial, feminist approach to women's health that resisted the medical establishment's focus on doctors and insisted that midwives and nursing assistants could be trained to care for most healthy women with uncomplicated deliveries. Cordero contradicted accepted American medical practice by recommending that local women be empowered to care for other women.

Cordero's article suggested that in under-resourced areas, the quality of medical care could be improved by increasing the involvement of community members, and by empowering

⁸⁵ Esi Sutherland, Efua's daughter, confirmed that her mother would go on these medical mission trips with Cordero, and she remembered one such trip following a measles outbreak. Esi Sutherland, interview by Sandy Placido in Accra, Ghana, September 5, 2013.

⁸⁶ Maya Angelou, *The Heart of a Woman* (New York: Random House, 2009 [1981]), 329.

⁸⁷ Maya Angelou, phone interview by Sandy Placido, June 15, 2011.

health workers who were not necessarily doctors or nurses. Cordero recommended that nurses, nurse aides, and midwives be provided with recognition and support so that they could take on responsibilities that would lighten the load of overextended physicians. Cordero wrote,

In many of the Health Centres registered nurses, and sometimes nurses aides, perform most of the minor surgery...A training programme for nurses aides could be formally organised, preferably on a regional basis. The physician could see each individual patient and determine if the cases can be taken care of by the auxiliary personnel. He could give specific instructions and check the work once it was done. He would serve as a teacher and consultant. Very little lowering in quality would be expected in these circumstances.⁸⁸

Cordero observed that auxiliary personnel were already doing a lot of this work, and so she insisted that they be formally trained and supervised. Cordero pointed out that the training required would not be complicated, and that using auxiliary personnel in this way would not sacrifice the quality of the care. Cordero also discussed how community participation led to improved health outcomes. Community participation could be achieved by tapping into the leadership already present within the community. Cordero proposed “auxiliary health educators for community work,”⁸⁹ explaining that many of the issues faced by patients were preventable, but that there was not enough manpower to do this additional educational work. Cordero wrote, “Health Centre involvement in community development is essential in order to attack the roots of the problem.”⁹⁰ Cordero was suggesting that the development of the broader community was essential to improving the health outcomes of patients.

At the end of her article, Cordero argued that because Puerto Rico had fewer resources, it should not be held to the medical care standards of the United States. Cordero wrote,

⁸⁸ Ana Livia Cordero, “The Determination of Medical Care Needs in Relation to a Concept of Minimal Adequate Care: An Evaluation of the Curative Outpatient Services of a Rural Health Centre,” in *Medical Care*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1964), 100.

⁸⁹ Cordero, “The Determination of Medical Care Needs,” 100.

⁹⁰ Cordero, “The Determination of Medical Care Needs,” 101.

This study has shown some of the problems that arise when the goals and standards of a developed country are transferred to a developing country. In their country of origin, these standards evolved gradually with the progressive availability of resources and in relation to local conditions. In developing countries, on the other hand, they are artificially imposed at the top, and interfere with a realistic appraisal of the situation and with the most efficient use of the limited resources.⁹¹

Cordero explained that medical standards in the United States were developed in relation to available resources. She critiqued that these standards were then “imposed” on Puerto Rico without an adequate assessment of conditions on the island. Cordero revealed how the lack of full self-determination in Puerto Rico was experienced at the everyday level of medical practice.

While in Ghana, Cordero had an opportunity to implement the recommendations she made in her journal article. The NIHR published an annual report for 1962-1963 that included a section on Community Medicine. In this section, we see that Cordero experimented with training and empowering auxiliary personnel to take on greater roles within the provision of medical care. The beginning of the Community Medicine segment made it clear that Cordero was spearheading this work.

In October, 1962, a proposed working plan for an urban pilot project in community health in Central Accra, an area with a population of approximately 64,000, was prepared by Dr. Cordero.⁹²

Just a year after arriving in Accra, Cordero was preparing the plan for a community health study that looked at a population of 64,000 people in the heart of Accra. This study looked at prenatal and neonatal health, paying attention to mortality rates amongst mothers and their children.

⁹¹ Cordero, “The Determination of Medical Care Needs,” 102.

⁹² Public Records and Archives Administration Department of Ghana, Reference Number GH/PRAAD/RG.11/1/293, 1961-1967, G.A.S. Medical Research (N.I.H.M.R. Institute). It is meaningful that the working plan Cordero proposed was a “pilot project,” since this is the name that Cordero gave to the political education and organizing group that she began in Puerto Rico in 1967 (in Spanish, the group was called Proyecto Piloto de Trabajo con el Pueblo). This is indicative of the fluidity between the medical and political work that Cordero conducted throughout her life, and it also gestures towards the role of experimentation in both her medical research and her political organizing.

An examination of the NIHMR report reveals that Cordero's recommendations were successfully implemented in the Ghanaian context. One part of the community section explained, "Clear-cut criteria for midwife referral to doctor of all cases needing treatment were established and have led to a two-thirds reduction in the number of patients seen by the doctor."⁹³ Cordero's suggestion that patients be pre-screened led to a reduction in the number of individuals seen by the overburdened doctors in the NIHMR study. The use of nursing assistants in this community medicine study also proved fruitful, and another section of the report noted that

two such assistants have been very successfully used since August, 1963. They perform clerical duties, weigh patients, take blood pressures, examine urines and help in numerous other clinic functions including patient and community education.⁹⁴

Cordero's idea that midwives and nursing assistants could be trained on the job to perform duties that would improve the efficiency of medical care provided was successful. The report also commented on how community health nurses and untrained nursing assistants were carrying out tasks previously done by public health nurses, such as group education, vaccination, and weighing of babies. This freed the public health nurses to focus on tuberculosis prevention and treatment, and the training of midwives to administer vaccinations.

Cordero's leadership role in this study and the implementation of many of her recommendations is particularly impressive when we consider that Ghana was in the early stages of developing an autonomous medical education and research program, and when we remember that Cordero was adjusting to life in a country where she stood out due to her skin color, and due to her presence as a woman in the prestigious and technical field of medicine. In addition, Cordero was balancing her professional activities, her political activities, and her role as a wife

⁹³ Public Records and Archives Administration Department of Ghana, Reference Number GH/PRAAD/RG.11/1/293, 1961-1967, G.A.S. Medical Research (N.I.H.M.R. Institute).

⁹⁴ Public Records and Archives Administration Department of Ghana, Reference Number GH/PRAAD/RG.11/1/293, 1961-1967, G.A.S. Medical Research (N.I.H.M.R. Institute).

and mother of two children under the age of five. What's more, Cordero's plan for the study was complex in that it looked at the behavior of doctors, auxiliary personnel, and community members, with the goal of determining what changes could be made to maximize the quality and efficiency of medical care provision. Here, her commitments to community-based public health and anticolonial struggles were clearly intertwined.

Decades later, doctors celebrated Cordero's research and her recommendations. An article published in 1971, "International Studies of Health Manpower: A Sociologic Perspective," discusses Cordero's study in relation to other studies:

Most of these studies have developed their rationale and methods from existing information. Because of the inherent difficulties, few have sought to relate their estimates of existing needs to actual modification of service programs. One such attempt was made at the Comerio Health Center in Puerto Rico in 1958 by Ana Livia Cordero, who, after appraising the minimal level of adequate care required by patients attending a clinic, sought to modify the provision of services in the health center.⁹⁵

The authors of this article acknowledged the difficulty of Cordero's 1958 study. In 1971 it was still rare for researchers to conduct studies like the one Cordero completed thirteen years earlier. Thus, Cordero's research was ahead of its time.

Cordero's study was mentioned in another article published in 1985. In this article, Jack Elinson writes,

In Puerto Rico, an internist, and also a former student, Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, under a Rockefeller grant, carried out an arresting, but insufficiently known, study that operationally defined "minimally adequate care" among patients in a smalltown public health center. Cordero's study (1964), published in *Medical Care* when it was still a British journal, established a method of determining a level of medical care that is both acceptable and feasible in economically poor countries of the world. Cordero's method sharply contrasts with the much publicized approach developed by Osler Peterson, which evaluated the delivery of primary medical care by general practitioners by applying the academic criteria of Harvard Medical School's Department of Internal Medicine.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Robin F. Badgley et al, "International Studies of Health Manpower: A Sociologic Perspective," in *Medical Care*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (May-Jun., 1971), 240.

⁹⁶ Jack Elinson, "The End of Medicine and the End of Medical Sociology?", in *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Dec., 1985), 271.

The fact that Cordero received a grant from the prestigious Rockefeller Foundation indicates the high level of her medical expertise. This quotation demonstrates that Cordero coined and applied the term “minimally adequate care,” and that she also established a research method “acceptable and feasible in economically poor countries of the world.” Cordero’s study was overshadowed by the study of a male doctor from Harvard, but this quotation from Elinson emphasizes the powerful implications and innovations in Cordero’s under-considered medical work.

Working at the intersection of anticolonial struggles

While in Ghana and other countries in Africa, Cordero made connections with individuals and organizations that promoted a united African, Latin American, and Asian struggle. In her interactions with these people and organizations, Cordero made it a point to spread information about, and seek support for, Puerto Rico’s struggle for independence. Cordero was a powerful and dangerous tool, because she could place Puerto Rico in conversation with various struggles, and she also had deep experiences in all the places she was trying to connect—Latin America, the United States, and Africa. This could not be said of other transnational leaders such as Che Guevara or Malcolm X, who were Cordero’s contemporaries. Guevara did not have extensive experience in the United States, and Malcolm X did not have extensive experience in Latin America. Cordero had both, plus the advantage of having lived in Africa, as well as being fully bilingual.

Africa had been seen as a docile player earlier in the century because it had not succumbed to Communist or Soviet influence.⁹⁷ With nations in Africa gaining independence,

⁹⁷ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 5.

they now became fertile breeding grounds for global, revolutionary ideas and alliances that privileged workers and formerly colonized nations. However, one surprise for United States surveillance was the influence of Cuba. This is why the link between Cuba (and by extension, the rest of Latin America) and Africa was so powerful—it was unexpected. Thus, Cordero's role in strengthening ties between Africa, Asia, and the Americas is particularly meaningful.

One way that Cordero strengthened these ties was with the role she played during the first of two trips that Malcolm X took to Africa in 1964, organizing his itinerary with a committee that included Alice Windom, Maya Angelou, and Vicki Garvin.⁹⁸ As a Puerto Rican, Cordero was one of the most prominent expatriates living in Ghana at the time, along with her husband.⁹⁹ For example, on the days preceding the August 28, 1963 March on Washington, groups of up to forty Black American expatriates and others would gather at the Cordero-Mayfield home to put together petitions and placards in preparation for solidarity actions targeting the United States embassy in Accra.¹⁰⁰ On the day before the March on Washington, Mayfield found out about the fragile W.E.B Du Bois's worsening health condition from Cordero, who was caring for the ill intellectual, and became close to him in his final years.¹⁰¹ Du Bois passed away that night, about an hour before the first action, a torch-lit march towards the United States embassy.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005* (Penguin, 2007), 354.

⁹⁹ Kevin Gaines, "From Black Power to Civil Rights: Julian Mayfield and African American Expatriates in Nkrumah's Ghana, 1957-1966," in *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945-1966*, ed. Christian G. Appy, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 266.

¹⁰⁰ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 170; David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. DuBois: The fight for equality and the American century, 1919-1963*, (Macmillan, 2001), 570.

¹⁰¹ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 171; David Levering Lewis, Phone Interview by Sandy Placido, March 9, 2011.

¹⁰² Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 171.

According to one account, Cordero played an indispensable, if comical, role during Malcolm's visit:

Malcolm neglected to tell them exactly what day he would get there. He called the Mayfields' house from the airport; Mayfield was out taking a French lesson, but his wife, Ana Livia, fetched Malcolm, dropped him at Miss Angelou's place and dashed off after Julian. "She rapped on the window and said, 'Malcolm is here,' " Mayfield remembered. "That was the last time I studied French."¹⁰³

In another account, it was Mayfield who picked Malcolm up from the airport, and instead took him directly to Leslie Alexander Lacy at the University of Ghana.¹⁰⁴ Whatever the case may be, Malcolm X was warmly received in the home of Cordero and Mayfield:

That evening, between thirty and forty Afro-American expatriates joined Malcolm at Mayfield and Ana Livia Cordero's home for lively discussion...Leslie Lacy described a festive atmosphere. 'We laughed, slapped hands, listened to Bessie Smith, talked some more, ate Ana Livia's curried goat, looked at Malcolm and *felt good*.'¹⁰⁵

This description of dinner and socializing at Cordero and Mayfield's home is an indication of the way Afro-diasporic solidarity was developed in intimate and joyful spaces. Malcolm X also described the warm welcome he received in Ghana in his autobiography, mentioning Cordero by name. He explained,

I simply couldn't believe this kind of reception five thousand miles from America! The officials of the press had even arranged to pay my hotel expenses, and they would hear no objection that I made...Then, during the beautiful dinner which had been prepared by Julian Mayfield's pretty Puerto Rican wife, Ana Livia (she was in charge of Accra's district health program), I was plied with questions by the eagerly interested black expatriates from America who had returned to Mother Africa.

¹⁰³ Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 175.

¹⁰⁴ Leslie Alexander Lacy, "Malcolm X in Ghana," in *Malcolm X: The Man and his Times*, ed. John Henrik Clarke (New York, Macmillan, 1969), 218-219.

¹⁰⁵ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 191.

Although Malcolm X comments on Cordero's looks and her cooking, he does acknowledge the role she played as a doctor in the country, and he captures the organization and excitement of the expatriates living in Ghana.

Later that year, on August 25, 1964, Cordero wrote a letter to Malcolm X, sending it to his Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) offices at Harlem's Theresa Hotel. Cordero's letter to Malcolm X made a powerful case for the inclusion of Puerto Rico in movements fighting imperialism and racism. Cordero's networks and the knowledge she acquired from the locations she inhabited made her an effective and strategic link between Puerto Rico and these movements. While other expatriates were concerned with showing "the indivisible nature of the freedom struggles of Africans and African Americans,"¹⁰⁶ Cordero's letter to Malcolm represents her attempt to expand the conversation that had begun several months before, during his visit to Accra.

In the two-page typewritten letter, Cordero set forth a four-level approach for connecting "the Puerto Rican liberation movement" with the "Afro-American nationalist freedom struggle" of the United States, movements that she asserted are "intrinsically related" and thus "should work together in common battle."¹⁰⁷ Along with the letter, Cordero sent "material on the Puerto Rican struggle that [she] prepared for use [in Ghana]," as well as a copy of a Spanish-language article that she wrote for the Pro-Independence Movement (MPI) newspaper, *Claridad*, on, as Cordero put it, "the relation between your struggle and ours."

Cordero wondered how the New York City race riots of the previous months had affected "Puerto Rican/Afro-American relations," and then she explained her four-level approach for

¹⁰⁶ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 156.

¹⁰⁷ Ana Livia Cordero to Malcolm X, August 25, 1964, box 14, folder 2, Malcolm X papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

raising political consciousness within the Puerto Rican community (both in the United States and the island). She wrote, “the approach to the Puerto Rican community itself is going to have to be done by levels depending on their degree of political consciousness.” Level 1, entitled “Orientation solely to immediate problems,” explains that Puerto Ricans will have to understand that they and African Americans share common problems and a common oppressor. Level 2, “Further understanding of the nature of the struggle,” delves into the ways that nationalism and racism divides African American and Puerto Rican communities on the mainland. Level 3, “Understanding of the anti-imperialist nature of the struggle,” proposes that the “Puerto Rican liberation movement and the Afro-American nationalist freedom struggle” need to unite into a “true liberation movement, that is a confrontation with the American power structure, with American imperialism.” In level 4, “Further understanding of the anti-imperialist struggle,” Cordero concludes, “the most important world-wide struggle today is between the colonial and ex-colonial segment of the world and the imperialist segment... This struggle must be waged primarily by the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.” Cordero concludes that the struggle must be reoriented, and that the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America should be leading the fight against a global system of imperialism.

Although Latin America was not initially a major part of initiatives such as the Non-Aligned Movement or the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization, Cordero’s activism while living in Ghana led to the expansion of solidarity between Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and to the greater inclusion of Puerto Rico’s anticolonial struggle. In October of 1964, the Second Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, which took place in Cairo, admitted the MPI as an observer. Even more importantly, forty-seven nations represented at the conference sent a letter to the United Nations decolonization committee, demanding that they examine the colonial

case of Puerto Rico.¹⁰⁸ This support from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was a major victory for the Puerto Rican liberation struggle. An article in *Claridad* declared, “El acuerdo de El Cairo ha sido, no solo el mayor triunfo diplomático del MPI, sino posiblemente el de mayor alcance jamás logrado por el independentismo puertorriqueño en un siglo de lucha” (The Cairo agreement has been, not only the greatest diplomatic triumph of MPI, but possibly the most far-reaching ever achieved by the Puerto Rican independence movement in a century of struggle).¹⁰⁹ And this achievement—the NAM’s recognition of Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States, as well as the broad, international support for the island’s campaign for independence—can be attributed in large part to Cordero.

In the months leading up to the NAM conference, Cordero laid the groundwork for the MPI’s participation and advocacy in Cairo. Cordero’s efforts led to Ghana’s Bureau of African Affairs to stretch beyond its intended role as a supporter of African liberation movements. In a letter that Cordero wrote to J.A. González González, head of the MPI mission to the United Nations, she explained that the Bureau viewed the case of Puerto Rico as one of clear colonialism, it supported the Puerto Rican struggle as a matter of principle, and it had recognized her as a “freedom fighter.”

Here, “freedom fighter” operated as a practical label. The Bureau instructed the Ghanaian embassy in Egypt to provide conference invitations for Cordero and other MPI members, they arranged Cordero’s travel to Cairo, and they would make sure to invite the MPI to any

¹⁰⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Sexta Asamblea MPI Dedicada a Evangelista Gonzalez y Ana Livia Cordero,” *Periodico Claridad*, March, 1965. MC 824, folder 7.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁰⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Sexta Asamblea MPI Dedicada a Evangelista Gonzalez y Ana Livia Cordero,” *Periodico Claridad*, March, 1965. MC 824, folder 7.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. All translations in this piece are my own.

conference throughout Africa where Puerto Rico could present its case.¹¹⁰ Cordero had unsuccessfully petitioned Algeria and the UAR (United Arab Republic) for an invitation to the Cairo conference, and so this support from Ghana was critical. Circumstances were especially auspicious, since the President of the United Nations General Assembly from 1964 to 1965 was Dr. Alex Quaison-Sackey, a Ghanaian who was the first black African president of the Assembly. Thanks to Cordero's relationship-building while in Ghana, the Bureau of African Affairs also informed Quaison-Sackey that he should support Puerto Rico in the UN, and assist Cordero with lobbying at the NAM conference (which he did).

In her letter to Gonzalez, Cordero warned that they must proceed cautiously, since Ghana was receiving support from the United States. She explained that the American pressure in Ghana was significant, and that the Americans had leverage since they were financing the construction of the Volta Dam, an important part of Ghana's industrialization program. In addition, Cordero pointed out that Quaison Sackey, although head of the UN General Assembly, was not of the left. She suggested that Gonzalez and maybe Mari Bras meet with Quaison Sackey, using extreme caution.

Cordero knew that discussing plans for involving Puerto Rico in a major, global conference that challenged the Great Powers (the United States and the Soviet Union) during the Cold War was extremely risky. Thus, Cordero told Gonzalez to burn the letter, and to send a copy to Mari Bras with a personal messenger. This instruction reveals both the measures taken by liberation activists during this period to conceal their efforts, as well as the shortfalls of such measures. It is unclear how the letter ended up in Cordero's police file. Puerto Rico's intelligence division either intercepted it on its way from Ghana to New York, New York to

¹¹⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Letter to J.A. González González, September 5, 1964. MC 824, folder 7.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Puerto Rico, or within Puerto Rico. Indeed, despite her precautions, Cordero's activities were being tracked throughout the entire time that she was in Ghana.

The MPI invited Quaison-Sackey to Puerto Rico in April of 1965, and in a *San Juan Star* article describing his visit, Quaison-Sackey made clear the indispensable role played by Cordero at the NAM conference:

The President of the United Nations General Assembly Alex Quaison-Sackey yesterday gave full credit to Ana Livia Cordero de Mayfield "and a few other Puerto Ricans" who accompanied her to Cairo last year for having promoted the case of Puerto Rico at the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations...Quaison-Sackey said Mrs. Mayfield "worked very hard there" to have a paragraph about Puerto Rico included in the report that later went to the United Nations Committee on Colonialism.¹¹¹

Quaison Sackey specifically highlighted Cordero's efforts in Cairo, mentioning her by name, and giving her credit for ensuring that Puerto Rico was mentioned in the conference report that was sent to the United Nations. Juan Mari Bras, the head of the MPI, had actually asked Cordero to invite Quaison Sackey to Puerto Rico in February of 1965. In just two months, Cordero was able to successfully fulfill this request, and this letter provides another example of Cordero's role in building and strengthening ties between Africa and Latin America.

Quaison-Sackey's comments during his trip to Puerto Rico were not the only acknowledgement Cordero received for her labors in Cairo. A March 1965 issue of *Claridad* stated, "Pero sí puede decirse con entera justicia que ningún puertorriqueño, individualmente, contribuyó tan directamente a ese triunfo como la compañera Cordero"¹¹² (it can be said with complete justice that no Puerto Rican, individually, contributed so directly to that victory as comrade Cordero did). The MPI's praise for Cordero did not end there. Juan Mari Bras, the

¹¹¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "Cairo Lobby," *San Juan Star* article, April, 1965. MC 824, folder 7.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹¹² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "Sexta Asamblea MPI Dedicada a Evangelista Gonzalez y Ana Livia Cordero," *Periodico Claridad*, March, 1965. MC 824, folder 7.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

founder and General Secretary of the MPI, sent a letter to Cordero in March of 1965, informing her that she had been named the organization's "Militant of the Year."¹¹³ Cordero shared the title with Evangelista Gonzalez, an MPI leader based on the island. MPI's sixth Assembly, which took place in April of 1965 was dedicated to Cordero and Gonzalez.

Following her triumph at the conference in Cairo, Cordero continued her international advocacy on behalf of Puerto Rico. During the first few months of 1965, Cordero wrote to the foreign ministers of member states in the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO). In memorandums written in English and French, she requested that they invite the MPI and grant them observer status at the Fourth Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference, to take place in Winneba, Ghana in May of 1965. By way of adding legitimacy to her cause, she brought up the MPI's recent victory:

The Non-Aligned Nations Conference in Cairo approved a resolution calling on the United Nations to consider the case of Puerto Rico... We ask that this conference support our struggle for independence and that it instruct Afro-Asian representatives in all international bodies, including the United Nations, to demand the immediate independence of Puerto Rico.¹¹⁴

Cordero mentioned the support the Puerto Rican independence movement had gotten in Cairo, and she saw the Afro-Asian conference as another opportunity to build alliances that would strengthen Puerto Rico's case at the United Nations. Advocacy at the United Nations was essential, given that the UN had removed Puerto Rico from its list of colonized countries following Puerto Rico's designation as a Commonwealth in 1952. In that year, Puerto Rico went from being an unincorporated organized territory of the United States, to an unincorporated

¹¹³ Cordero shared this honor with Evangelista González, the head of the MPI branch in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Letter from Juan Mari Bras to Ana Livia Cordero, March 9, 1965. MC 824, folder 7.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹¹⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "Letter to the Foreign Ministers of the Afro-Asian States," 1965. MC 824, folder 7.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

organized territory of the United States *with* Commonwealth status.¹¹⁵ Puerto Rico's conversion into a Commonwealth was the result of an ostensibly democratic process, during which the Puerto Rican people were given the opportunity to draft and vote on a new constitution. However, the United States Congress and President closely oversaw this process, and the resulting status maintained that the United States Congress and President could override any decision made by political leaders on the island. Thus, Puerto Rican liberation activists have argued that the push to become a Commonwealth was part of an effort by the United States to disguise its continued imperial control over the island, and they have fought to build recognition and solidarity with other colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial entities throughout the world.¹¹⁶

To top off Cordero's eventful year of international advocacy and recognition, the May, 1965 Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference in Winneba, in which fifty countries participated, did in fact approve a resolution demanding the immediate independence of Puerto Rico. Again, the MPI was included as an observer at the conference, with Cordero representing the movement as its permanent delegate in Africa. It was at Winneba that plans were made for a

¹¹⁵ "Puerto Rico," in *The World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency, accessed at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rq.html>. In Spanish, Puerto Rico is considered an Estado Libre Asociado, or Free Associated State, which is not only contradictory, but is not actually a translation of the word Commonwealth. This is just the beginning of many more contradictions that are embedded in the Puerto Rican reality.

¹¹⁶ For more on the creation of the Puerto Rican commonwealth, see Juan Mari Bras, "El caso de Puerto Rico en la ONU," in *Abriendo Caminos: Selección de discursos y ponencias que son hilo conductor del pensamiento político del autor durante el curso de cuarenta y dos años*, (Editora Causa Común, 2001); Solsiree del Moral, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013); Carmen Teresa Whalen, "Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: An Introduction," in *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Carmen Teresa Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005); Lillian Guerra, *Popular Expression and National Identity in Puerto Rico: The Struggle for Self, Community, and Nation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); and Héctor Reyes, "Puerto Rico: The Last Colony," *International Socialist Review*, Issue 03, Winter 1997.

conference that would bring together liberation fighters from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and which would take place in Cuba.¹¹⁷

Cordero went on to represent Puerto Rico at what became the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America's Tricontinental Conference, which took place in Havana in January of 1966. At the conference, Cordero indirectly supported the Chinese communists.¹¹⁸ Cordero advocated strongly so that the African American militant Robert Williams could attend the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Cuba. Williams, who had taken refuge in Cuba after fleeing the United States in 1961, had increasingly clashed with Castro's government, especially given his developing relationship with China.¹¹⁹ Another Puerto Rican who attended the Tricontinental—Cordero's colleague Narciso Rabell Martínez—made a statement that demonstrates the difference between the way that Puerto Rico and Cuba affiliated geopolitically during this time. In a newspaper article following the conference, Rabell said that the Movimiento Pro Independencia (MPI, Pro Independence Movement), would accept help for their independence struggle from any nation, whether they were communist or not.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Report on the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference prepared by the Puerto Rican police Intelligence Division, May 25, 1965. MC 824, folder 7.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹¹⁸ A 1968 article on Cordero and the Proyecto provides further evidence that Cordero agreed with Chinese communism. The article describes the Proyecto's work space: "The office had a picture of Red China's Chairman Mao, sea relics, a poster in honor of Zoilo Cajigas, Puerto Rico's last great santero, and a carved piece of wood reading, 'El Che vive donde lucha el pueblo' (Che lives on where the people fight on)." Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "People with Purpose: Revolution," *San Juan Star*, 1968. MC 824, folder 1.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹¹⁹ Ronald Stephens, "'Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition': Robert F. Williams's Crusade for Justice on Behalf of Twenty-two Million African Americans as a Cuban Exile," in *Black Diaspora Review*, 2(1), Fall 2010, 14-26.

¹²⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "MPI en Cuba: Dicen EU Adiestra 'Guerrilleros' Aquí," *El Mundo*, January 10, 1966. MC 824, 11.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

A month after Cordero returned from Cuba, Nkrumah was overthrown. Cordero and Mayfield had separated by then, and Mayfield had relocated to Ibiza, Spain. Cordero was detained briefly after the coup. After being released, she remained in Accra until June 1966, with Rafael (who turned nine in April) and Emiliano (who was four). During these months, Cordero wrote a letter to Mayfield, which she sent to his address in Ibiza. Cordero's handwriting, which is not easy to read, is especially difficult to decipher in this letter. Cordero's nerves may have been shaken by the chaotic scenes she described to Mayfield.

Woken up around 4am this morning by a blast followed by shooting in direction of Flagstaff...Called to wake up friends we know who might be in danger. They are all at this moment safe...It looks very bad...army and police have taken over...People are in the streets tonight cheering (everywhere). Students at Legon cheering...apparently airplanes flying so will rush to airport and will cable you when I can. This whole thing is like all our worse predictions come true...kids alright.¹²¹

In her update to Mayfield, Cordero described the violence, excitement and instability she witnessed around her, and she also expressed that the political transition was one that she and others had worried about previously. Perhaps Cordero made some of these "predictions" with W.E.B. Du Bois, with whom she shared concerns about Nkrumah's government several years before the coup.

Finally, on June 4, 1966, Cordero received a letter from the principal immigration officer of Ghana's Ministry of the Interior.

Sir,

I am directed by the Principal Secretary, Ministry of the Interior to inform you that your permit to remain in Ghana has been revoked. You are therefore warned that you should leave Ghana within five days of the date hereof and in any event not later than 7 p.m. on the 8th of June, 1966.¹²²

¹²¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Letter from Ghana to Julian, 1966. MC 824, 2.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹²² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Expulsion Letter, 1966. MC 824, 2.5. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Besides being mistaken as a man, Cordero was given five days to prepare for her departure from Ghana. Cordero left the country just a few days after the 8th of June. On Monday, June 13, 1966, the front page of Ghana's *Daily Graphic* reported,

Two persons were deported from the country at the week-end. They are Dr Anna Livia Cordero of the Ghana Academy of Sciences and Mr L.W. Holt, an Afro-American who claimed to be a lawyer, writer and journalist...Dr Cordero has been living in Ghana for the past five years. Her personal views against colonialism and support for Pan-Africanism are well-known and appreciated by the new Government of Ghana. The Government is, however, satisfied from recent Investigation, that Dr Cordero has, since the February 24 Revolution, been engaged in activities not considered to be in the best interest of the security of the state and quite outside her profession as a medical practitioner. Dr Cordero is a Puerto Rican. Mr L.W. Holt has been in Ghana for the past three months as guest of Dr Cordero and has also been ordered by the Government to leave the country for security reasons.¹²³

During her last three months in Ghana, Cordero was accompanied by Len Holt, an African American civil rights lawyer with whom she had begun a relationship. Although her first and last names are misspelled, this article correctly described Cordero's gender, professional work in Ghana, and support of anti-colonialism and Pan-Africanism.¹²⁴ Despite her political views—which Ghana's new government “appreciated”—Cordero (and by extension, Holt) was considered a security threat, most likely because of her prior affiliation with Nkrumah.

Before flying across the Atlantic, Cordero and her two young sons stopped in Ibiza to visit Mayfield. In a letter that Shirley Graham Du Bois wrote to Mayfield from Cairo on July 5, 1966, she shared,

Now that Anna Alivia and your sons have been “deported” and are with you I know that you are practically right back in Africa! Tell Anna Alivia that the Sinnettes from Ibadan were in to see me a couple of nights ago. They told me of her telephone call and asked if I had seen anything on her press conference at the Airport. I showed them the clipping I did have the Ghana Times of June 13th with a streamer all across the front page “3 SACKED FROM GHANA” but not a word

¹²³ “2 deported,” in *Daily Graphic*, June 13, 1966; George Padmore Research Library on African Affairs, Accra, Ghana.

¹²⁴ Cordero's name is misspelled in various English-language accounts, including those by Maya Angelou and Shirley Graham Du Bois.

quoting Anna Alivia, nor about a “press conference”...Love to Anna Alivia. I’m surprised she lasted there that long!¹²⁵

The fact that Graham Du Bois placed quotation marks around the word deported seems to indicate that, indeed, Cordero’s expulsion was ceremonious in nature, meant to be representative of the new government’s desire to make its position on the previous administration clear.

Another clue that Cordero’s deportation was not conventional was the reference to a potential press conference at the airport, indicating the political symbolism of the removal. In addition, the fact that Cordero was not expelled immediately also indicates the way in which political lines in the months following the coup were still very much in flux. Graham Du Bois mentioned a Nigerian couple, the Sinnettes, who worked in the medical field and were friends with Cordero and Mayfield, maintaining correspondence with them in the coming years.

Cordero’s passport from the time reveals that she left Spain and arrived in New York City on August 31, 1966.¹²⁶ On September 4, 1966, Cordero wrote a letter to Mayfield where she discusses wanting to get a divorce. She explained,

Baby, I am writing to tell you that I think it best that we get a divorce as soon as possible...one evening you listed a list of conditions that you wold [sic] want a wife of yours to fulfill. If I remember them correctly, they were that she should not be a political person but be content with the role of your wife; that she should be happy to do the things that you wanted to do and make no demands of her own, and that she should in no way interfere with your privacy or make any demands on you as to your behaviour.¹²⁷

Mayfield was questioning Cordero’s political activity, much like her first husband, Charlie Rosario had. Cordero’s major political accomplishments while in Ghana created tension in her

¹²⁵ Shirley Graham Du Bois papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹²⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Passports. MC 824, 2.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹²⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Letters with Julian Mayfield re: divorce. MC 824, 2.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

marriage. This is an example of the power of the gender conventions of the era. Even Cordero was not exempt from the effects of patriarchy within her intimate relationships.

Cordero anxiously explained to Mayfield how to go about filing the divorce as quickly and cheaply as possible. She wrote,

What you have to do is to sign the following paper and have it notarized and mail it back. One can get divorces in Alabama easily and cheaply and I have gone ahead and made all the arrangements for it.¹²⁸

Cordero was likely in Alabama because of Holt, who was born in the southern state in 1928. Indeed, there is a bill of complaint for the divorce that Cordero filed against Mayfield in the circuit court of Macon County, Alabama, which lists her residence as 311 Gregory Place, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. There is little documentation of the time Cordero spent in the southern United States, but years later, Cordero wrote that in 1966 she traveled through the area “acompañada por militantes de SNCC”¹²⁹ (accompanied by SNCC militants). Cordero would have been intersecting with Holt’s associates, given his work with Civil Rights organizations such as CORE.¹³⁰ It is possible that this is the period when Cordero met James Forman. This was an important time to be in Alabama and in the south, since James Meredith had just been shot during his March Against Fear in June of 1966, and Stokely Carmichael gave his now famous Black Power speech about a week later.¹³¹ Another trace of Cordero’s time in the United States south is her passport, which contains a stamp dated September 14, 1966, from Matamoros,

¹²⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Letters with Julian Mayfield re: divorce. MC 824, 2.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹²⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Poder para los negros.” MC 824, 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹³⁰ For more on Len Holt, see Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹³¹ See Peniel Joseph, *Waiting ‘til the Midnight Hour*.

Tamaulipas, Mexico, a border city right across from Brownsville, Texas.¹³² Perhaps Cordero and Holt took a short vacation together during Cordero's first month back in the United States (and just ten days after Cordero wrote her letter to Mayfield about wanting a divorce). It is unclear where Rafael and Emiliano were during this time.

Although Cordero's time in Ghana ended abruptly, her advocacy on behalf of Puerto Rican liberation during the early 1960s was crucial. Latin America was not initially a major part of initiatives such as the Non-Aligned Movement or the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization. The AAPSO had its first conference in 1957, but did not seriously discuss bringing in representatives from Latin America until 1961.¹³³ At the NAM's first conference, which took place in Yugoslavia in 1961, Cuba was the only country from Latin America whose delegates were recognized as representatives (although Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador were observers). During the 1964 NAM conference, Cuba's delegates were again recognized as representatives, but this time, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela, and, of course, Puerto Rico, sent observers to Cairo.¹³⁴ By insisting on the inclusion of Puerto Rico at the conferences in Egypt and Ghana, and by building with representatives from all three continents, Cordero brought Puerto Rico into the web of global, anti-imperial struggle. Liberation fighters from Puerto Rico, such as Cordero, were pioneers when it came to establishing tricontinental ties during the tense Cold War period in which people of color around the world were cautiously

¹³² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Passports. MC 824, 2.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹³³ Charles Neuhauser, *Third World Politics: China and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, 1957-1967* (Harvard University Asia Center, 1968), 42.

¹³⁴ "Conferences of Nonaligned Countries," in *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition* (1970-1979). Accessed at <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Conferences+of+Nonaligned+Countries>

guarding hard-earned, if constantly shifting, identities as independent and post-revolutionary nations.

Chapter Three

The Proyecto Piloto: A New Direction for the Puerto Rican Left

Si estamos haciendo efectivos, nos van a caer encima, nos van a quemar la casa, nos van a disparar.
¡Pues!
(If we are being effective, they will attack us, burn our house, shoot at us. Well!)

-Samuel¹

Cuando yo vi a Ana Livia, yo vi a la revolución triunfante.
(When I saw Ana Livia, I saw the triumphant revolution.)

-Papo²

1966 was a personally and politically intense year for Cordero, but when she returned to Puerto Rico that fall, she dove right into the island's political organizing. Cordero had begun the year at the Tricontinental Conference in Cuba, traveled back across the Atlantic to Ghana, was deported and flew north to Spain, crossed the Atlantic again, and spent time in the United States South and Mexico. Given the international activism she had done on behalf of Puerto Rico, Cordero became one of the MPI's recognized spokespeople on the island. She was a public representative of the organization, traveling to speak to members in various branches throughout the island. In February of 1967, Cordero began having conversations with MPI members about starting a new organization. The MPI supported this initiative, and advertised Cordero's call for applicants in their periodical, *Claridad*. In April 1967, Cordero began the Proyecto Piloto de Trabajo con el Pueblo (Pilot Project for Work with the People). The Proyecto's aim was to cultivate leadership within communities that had been under-engaged by mainstream political movements, and provide people with the tools they needed to achieve liberation at an individual

¹ Samuel Aviles, interview by Sandy Placido in Puerto Rico, July 19, 2013.

² Papo Figueroa, interview by Sandy Placido in Puerto Rico, July 17, 2013.

and collective level. Proyecto members combined popular education, social science, Marxist, and scientific methods in their organizing. The Proyecto began in Barrio Tortugo, and eventually spread to communities such as Vietnam, Vega Baja, and Juana Matos, which represented a cross-section of Puerto Rican society (urban slums, public housing projects, and highway, squatter, coastal, and mountain communities). Early members of the Project, many of whom were former college students, lived in these communities, and their job was to conduct interviews that would allow them to both learn about the neighborhood, and identify and recruit members, and initiate and support organizing efforts. For the Proyecto, people had to liberate themselves of internalized colonialism at a personal level before they could organize for the collective liberation and political independence of Puerto Rico. This personal liberation was achieved through in-depth investigations into, and discussions about, Puerto Rican reality. The Proyecto used visual arts, music, and theater extensively, as a way to understand and represent the concepts of “conflict, control, and change”³ in their class-based analysis of society. Eventually, the Proyecto would have a traumatic split with the MPI, largely because of conflicts involving Cordero. Within six months, the Proyecto lost the support of the MPI, and Juan Mari Bras, the head of the MPI, went so far as to accuse Cordero of being a CIA agent.⁴

This chapter will narrate Cordero’s creation of the Proyecto, explaining why her work led to her fall from grace as a beloved member of the MPI. The chapter also discusses how the insights Cordero gained because of her experiences throughout the African diaspora (including Puerto Rico) shaped the Proyecto during a time of political and economic transition in Puerto Rico. The Proyecto focused on multiple levels of anti-colonial work: individual, collective, and

³ Interviews with Rafael Mayfield and Efrain Negrón.

⁴ Carlos Alamo, *Seams of Empire*, 127.

global. In leading the Proyecto, Cordero drew from experiences which had helped her see the connection between the Puerto Rican liberation struggle and struggles in other parts of the world. Cordero's approach, which foregrounded the importance of anti-racism, anti-capitalism, and individual liberation in the anti-colonial struggle, offered an alternative to the mainstream independence movement in Puerto Rico. Cordero's experiences in the African diaspora, where she interacted with leaders in the movements against racism and imperialism, as well as her community-based public health methods, influenced the way she conceived of and implemented the Proyecto. Her perspective was global, and it emphasized the intertwined nature of racism, colonialism, and capitalism.⁵ Cordero had a global perspective, but she also made sure to center Puerto Rico, highlighting the ways in which the island's history produced a specific experience of racism and colonialism. Cordero, in her own words, explained how influential her experiences in the United States and Ghana were in shaping her understanding of the role of anti-racist struggle and Black Pride. Lastly, Cordero probably drew from her work in rural and developing communities in Ghana and Puerto Rico when she promoted the use of art for the political education of marginalized communities. This chapter will also cover the surveillance that the Proyecto faced, and the way they responded to that surveillance and repression.

Anti-Imperialism and Independence at Home: Leaving the MPI

By the time Cordero returned to Puerto Rico in the fall of 1967, not only was she coming from a country with shattered post-independence dreams, but she had also spent time in the United States during an era of heightened racial struggle. In addition, Cordero entered a Puerto Rico that was also in the midst of much change. Puerto Rico had a plebiscite in 1967, meaning

⁵ Alamo's work also discusses how Cordero's race-consciousness led to an expansion of the Puerto Rican leftist agenda. Carlos Alamo, *Seams of Empire*.

that people were given a chance to vote for either commonwealth, state, or independent status. The MPI discouraged participation in this vote since they felt that such a vote was illegal and irrelevant given Puerto Rico's colonial status, and Cordero was active in this anti-plebiscite campaign. 1968 marked the end of the reign of the Populares, and the winning of a pro-statehood party, the Partido Nuevo Progresista, or PNP. In addition, Operation Bootstrap, as it entered its second phase, saw growing unemployment on the island, even as capital intensive industrialization continued. The types of industries coming to the island changed since people needed higher wages to match rising prices.⁶ The agricultural sector continued to collapse, a disproportionate number of Puerto Ricans were being recruited and dying in the Vietnam War.⁷ In a funding proposal for the Proyecto written by Cordero, she explained the economic context of Puerto Rico, and why Operation Bootstrap had not solved the island's most pressing problems. She wrote, "US investment in light and medium industry in a situation of agricultural stagnation and economic dependency have been unable to solve the chronic unemployment situation (18% unemployment, 30% underemployment)."⁸ Due to the bad economy, working class people either migrated or remained on the island. Those struggling to survive on the island were the people Cordero and the Proyecto wanted to reach. Of those who migrated, Cordero wrote, "Migration of a large sector of the population to the Eastern United States has been unsuccessfully sought as a solution to the problem of unemployment. As a result, almost one million of a population of 4

⁶ See James Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico*.

⁷ Unemployment was 11.6% in 1968 and jumped to 19.4% in 1974. Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico*.

⁸ Cordero's analysis is like that of the economic historian, James Dietz. Cordero and Dietz both explained how the declining agriculture industry that accompanied the rise of Operation Bootstrap industries was not a viable economic solution for Puerto Rico.

million Puerto Rican now live in the hostile urban ghettos of NY, Newark, Philadelphia and even Chicago, reflecting there and in PR the turmoil inherent in such major social upheaval.”⁹

In addition to the contrasts and continuities that Cordero experienced as she traveled across various countries and continents in a short period, Cordero’s personal life also looked quite different upon returning to Puerto Rico. Cordero settled in to Puerto Rico with Len Holt and her two children. It is unclear how long Holt stayed in Puerto Rico with Cordero, but Holt was mentioned in Cordero’s Puerto Rican intelligence file as late as December 1967:

Regresamos a la Plaza de Mercado de Bayamón a las 10:35am donde vimos un grupo como de cinco a seis jóvenes y la guagua 146-179 que está a nombre de Len W. Halt, esposo de Ana Livia Cordero.¹⁰

(We returned to the Plaza de Mercado of Bayamón at 10:35am where we saw a group of about five or six young people and the van 146-179 which is in the name of Len W. Halt, husband of Ana Livia Cordero.)

Puerto Rican intelligence assumed that Holt and Cordero were married, which indicates that they were spending a good deal of time together. Their relationship is an example of yet another intercultural relationship with bidirectional influence between a Puerto Rican and an African American. Holt, a prominent Civil Rights activist and lawyer of the period, spent a significant amount of time in Puerto Rico, time which likely influenced his worldview, but which has not been explored in scholarship.¹¹ Also, in the same way that Cordero’s name is misspelled by English speakers, Holt’s name was misspelled by Spanish speakers, revealing the ways that

⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Description of Project, 1967. MC 824, folder 3.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Police surveillance, 1967. MC 824, 7.7. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹¹ For more on Len Holt, see Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

individuals can be misrepresented, and thus lost, in the historical record as they move across spaces with different languages.

Amidst this transitional time in Puerto Rican history, which was also a time of heightened political activity, Cordero jumped right into the work being done by the MPI around the island in order to address these issues. Although it is unclear exactly when Cordero returned to Puerto Rico from her time in the United States south, her Puerto Rican police intelligence file notes her first appearance in Puerto Rico following the coup as October 30, 1966, when she attended an MPI meeting in Aguadilla. Throughout the rest of 1966 and early 1967, the police file notes that Cordero was involved in MPI activities, at times working closely with the organization's leader, Juan Mari Bras. She is described as photographing petro-chemical plants with Mari Bras in Guayama in November, and in December, she and Norman Pietri reported back on the Tricontinental Conference at an MPI meeting.¹² In January of 1967, she gave her "El Poder Negro" speech at the Stokely Carmichael event organized by the MPI and FUPI at the University of Puerto Rico.

Planning for the Proyecto Piloto de Trabajo con el Pueblo began during this period. In February 1967, Cordero's police file explains that Cordero had a meeting with other MPI members at the Hollywood restaurant in Río Piedras. The file reports, "Habló sobre el 'Plan Piloto', consistente en un adiestramiento por 15 meses y de tipo confidencial"¹³ (she spoke about a 'Pilot Plan', consisting of a 15-month, confidential training). About a week and a half later, the MPI's Carta Semanal published an article that announced recruitment for what would become

¹² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Police Surveillance. MC 824, box 7. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Police Surveillance. MC 824, box 7. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

the Proyecto Piloto. The article was titled “Se solicitan jóvenes” (young people are solicited) and those who were interested were told to contact Cordero.¹⁴ By April 20, 1967, Cordero’s police file reported that Proyecto activities had begun: “Información recibida revela que ésta en unión a René Marquez y otros, les ofrecen adiestramiento a un grupo de jovenes sobre la historia de Lenin” (information received reveals that she along with René Marquez and others, are offering training to a group of young people on the history of Lenin).¹⁵ A few days later, the Puerto Rican intelligence reported that Cordero was offering training on sabotage tactics and communist doctrine.¹⁶ Early on, the Puerto Rican police was concerned with Cordero’s affiliation with communist ideology, which is indicative of broader anti-communist sentiments during this era of the Cold War period.¹⁷

The Proyecto’s first house and training center was in Barrio Tortugo. Members of the Proyecto lived and learned in this house. Cordero lived nearby with her two sons, refusing to move in with her parents who lived in the richer and more comfortable Beverly Hills neighborhood. In 1968, the *San Juan Star* profiled the Proyecto in their Sunday magazine, and the article explained why Cordero chose to work in Barrio Tortugo:

¹⁴ As Alamo discusses in his own work, Cordero worked closely with and on behalf of the MPI when she returned to the island in 1966, and the MPI supported the establishment of the Proyecto. Carlos Alamo, *Seams of Empire*.

¹⁵ René Marquez was an important Puerto Rican visual artist and writer of the period, who was involved in DIVEDCO, a government arts program sponsored by the Populares. For more on DIVEDCO, see Cati Marsh Kennerley, “Cultural Negotiations: Puerto Rican Intellectuals in a State Sponsored Community Education Project, 1948-1968,” in *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 73, No. 3, Fall 2003, and Mariam Colón Pizarro, *Poetic Pragmatism: The Puerto Rican Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO) and the Politics of Cultural Production, 1949-1968*, Ph.D Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011.

¹⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Police Surveillance. MC 824, box 7. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁷ Given the 1959 Cuban revolution, radical movements in the Caribbean were especially concerning for anti-communist forces. For example, in 1965, the United States intervened in the Dominican Republic after the country’s democratically elected president, Juan Bosch, was overthrown. The United States occupied the country for nine months, essentially supporting anti-Bosch forces, because of fears that Bosch was too revolutionary.

She wanted to live in a community representative of the type of people she was going to work with. Barrio Tortugo, made up mostly of low salaried wage earners and representing the typical “highway community” of Puerto Rico, fit the bill. The fact that 68 per cent of the population is under 25 years of age, that 65 per cent of the people are “trigueno,” (mixed blood) and that the barrio is in transition from a rural to urban way of life presented what she regarded as a representative example of Puerto Rico today.¹⁸

Barrio Tortugo was seen as representative because of its demographics and the community’s history as a “highway community,” one of the residential communities that had sprung up alongside the roads leading in and out of San Juan. The Proyecto completed a substantial amount of work in Tortugo between 1967 and 1971, when its house was firebombed, forcing the group to operate on a more clandestine level.

After only a few months, relations between the MPI and the Proyecto began to sour. The founding of this organization was part of a shift in strategy for disillusioned members of the Puerto Rican left. By October 1967, there were already meetings where there were discussions about the Proyecto separating from the MPI. The police file reported that on October 14, 1967, Cordero went to a JMPI meeting at the home of Miguel Hernández Mathews (which intelligence also associated with a group called Movimiento Revolucionario) in Bayamón. Apparently at this meeting, “se acordó separarse del MPI y unirse al grupo de la Sra. Cordero” (it was agreed on to separate from the MPI and join Mrs. Cordero’s group). By October 15, the intelligence reported that Cordero was expelled from the MPI. A week later, the police noted, “un grupo de jovenes de la JMPI se reunió en una casa vieja en la playa de Vega Baja para tomar acuerdos para unirse todos al proyecto de la Dra. Cordero (a group of young people from the JMPI met in an old house on the beach of Vega Baja in order to agree to all join Dr. Cordero’s project).¹⁹

¹⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “People with Purpose: Revolution,” *San Juan Star*, 1968. MC 824, folder 1.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Police Surveillance. MC 824, box 7. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

JMPI organizational documents provide an indication of just how many of the group's key leaders left to join the Proyecto. In May of 1967, a new crop of JMPI leaders were announced. Juan A. Silén was the organization's new president, Rubén Alvarez was the Secretary of Organization, Néstor Sanchez was a Sub-Secretary, Antonio Díaz Royo was Secretary of Political Education, Miguel Rodríguez López was Sub-Secretary of Political Education, Miguel Hernandez Mathews was Secretary of Student Affairs, Raul Mayo was Press Secretary, Wilfredo Nuñez was a vocal, and William Pintado was described as part of the Secretariat of the JMPI. Francisco Manrique Cabrera, General Director, also later became an instructor for the Proyecto. All of these individuals would leave the JMPI and become members of the Proyecto, undergoing training and working in communities such as Juana Matos. In fact, the same JMPI document that lists the new leadership for May 1967 notes that Néstor Sanchez and Raul Mayo left the group in order to join the Proyecto Piloto.²⁰

By August 21, 1967, there were already conversations at the MPI organizational level about conflicts in the group. On that day, a letter went out on MPI letterhead (which described itself as the "Vanguardia Patriótica Puertorriqueña), calling for a two-day meeting on August 26th and 27th, that was strictly limited to those with an invitation, and those who were members of the MPI National Mission. Members were also told not to publicize the meeting. On the second day of the meeting, the first item on the agenda was the "informe de la comisión política en relación con la JMPI" (report from the political commission in relation to the JMPI). The meeting would continue on September 3rd.²¹

²⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; JMPI conflict. MC 824, E.36. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; JMPI conflict. MC 824, E.36. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The report from the MPI's political commission laid out the problems the MPI had with the JMPI. The document explained that in the weeks prior to the meeting, the political commission had been examining complaints coming from the interim secretary general of the MPI, Norman Pietri, against the JMPI, and specifically Juan Angel Silen, who was the President of the JMPI. According to Pietri, the actions of Silen and others in the JMPI "violentaban las normas de democracia interna y centralismo democratico que deben regir en nuestra organizacion"²² (violated the internal, democratic norms and democratic centralism that are supposed to be in place in our organization). The report explained that there was one meeting where there was an "agrio debate" (sour debate) between Pietri and JMPI members, which degenerated into a "encuentro desagradable" (disagreeable encounter) which caused the political commission to postpone the discussion.²³ When the second meeting was held, the report explained that the JMPI had unanimously decided to expel Pietri from their group, due to "diferencias ideologicas y conducta ofensiva" (ideological differences and offensive behavior). During this meeting, the JMPI also requested that the MPI's political commission set aside a time for the JMPI to present a written document where they could explain the "diferencias ideologicas entre dicho Secretariado y la Direccion Nacional"²⁴ (ideological differences between the JMPI and the National MPI). The political commission's response to the JMPI request was as follows:

La Comision Politica rechazo por intolerable la resolucion del Secretariado de la Juventud que expulsaba al compañero Norman Pietri, entendiendo que, ademas de ser un insulto a la Direccion

²² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; JMPI conflict. MC 824, E.36. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; JMPI conflict. MC 824, E.36. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; JMPI conflict. MC 824, E.36. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Nacional en la persona de uno de sus miembros mas destacados, era improcedente y contraria a todas las normas y al reglamento del MPI por tratarse del Secretariado General Interino quien, por naturaleza de su cargo, es miembro de todos los organismos del Movimiento.²⁵

(The Political Commission rejected as intolerable the resolution of the Youth Secretariat which expelled Comrade Norman Pietri, understanding that, besides being an insult to the National Directorate in the person of one of its most prominent members, it was improper and contrary to all rules and regulations of the MPI, since it is the Interim General Secretariat, which, by its nature, is a member of all the agencies of the movement).

The MPI would not tolerate the autonomous actions of the JMPI, and their decision to reject Pietri. Pietri worked with Cordero during the Non-Aligned conference in Egypt, and he had also attended the Tricontinental in Cuba with her, and given his efforts to promote the Puerto Rican cause abroad, the MPI's political commission was highly offended by the mutinous behavior of the JMPI. The report went on to explain the JMPI informed the political commission that they did not have "diferencias ideologicas con la Comision Politica como cuerpo, sino que con dos de sus miembros Cesar Andreu Iglesias y Norman Pietri y agrega que dichas diferencias ideologicas estriban en tener visions distintas de cual ha de ser la funcion de la juventud en el MPI y cual ha de ser el enfoque de la lucha nacional de independencia"²⁶ (Ideological differences with the Political Commission as a body, but with two of its members Cesar Andreu Iglesias and Norman Pietri and adds that these ideological differences are based on having different visions of what should be the role of youth in the MPI and what should be the focus of the national struggle for independence). That the JMPI would have problems with two such important members of the Puerto Rican left, but it is also an indication that there was a generational divide that was growing between the generations. They also were concerned about the role of youth, and about the vision for what the focus should be a national struggle for independence.

²⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; JMPI conflict. MC 824, E.36. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; JMPI conflict. MC 824, E.36. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The JMPI members who left and were kicked out of the MPI were upset that the MPI was hierarchical and not engaging with working-class communities. They also felt that the MPI's processes were not democratic or self-critical enough. They saw the MPI as wanting to be the vanguard, leading the rest of the people on the island. However, these young people had more of a "national liberation" model which dictated that the most marginalized communities on the island needed to be more fully involved in the revolution from the outset. Cordero's organization, which promoted grassroots organizing with people who had been left out of mainstream independence movements provided just the alternative that these JMPI members were looking for.

Cordero herself described why the Proyecto's work was necessary within the political and economic landscape of Puerto Rico. She wrote,

Our working class is not the industrial organized worker of the capitalist countries, but the so-called "lumpen", the unemployed, the under employed and the agricultural proletariat. It is [out] of them that the young fighters and the principal support for the struggle must come...they are already fighting the system in the spontaneous ways they know best.²⁷

Cordero recognized that economic and other historical factors had created populations of people in Puerto Rico that did not fit neatly into existing models of class struggle. Proyecto members mined their own experiences, drawing from their everyday realities to collectively produce materials that allowed them to understand society, empower themselves and each other, and continue creating change. The Proyecto was ahead of its time when it came to encouraging disenfranchised people of color to creatively apply theories that explained the relationship between racism and imperialism.

²⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *Liberación*, 1968. MC 824, folder 4.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The Proyecto as grassroots anti-imperialism

The Proyecto was an organizing and political education group that worked at the grassroots level to empower politically under-engaged communities, teaching them to use Marxist, social science, and popular education methods to understand and change not only their colonial reality, but also themselves. Although Cordero came from a relatively elite family, and had been a major leader in mainstream movements on the island, she decided that what counted most was work with people most impacted by colonialism. One of the reasons the Proyecto was so innovative amongst movements on the island was because of who the organization chose to work with, and the type of work that was done with these individuals. Cordero's interest in decolonization at the individual level—of liberating oneself of the effects of internalized colonialism—probably had much to do with her experiences as a doctor and public health advocate. She was interested in the well-being of the collective and the individual, and she understood how the health of these two entities were related. Her approach also may have had roots in her own experiences of personal liberation. As a dancer and doctor, she had to develop discipline and a belief in herself.

One of Proyecto's most important guiding principles was that decolonization at the individual level was a prerequisite for decolonization at the collective level. Decolonizing at the individual level meant understanding the structural forces that shaped identity and behavior. The Proyecto encouraged members to reject fear, low self-esteem, weakness, and dependence on authority, and replace it with confidence, logical thinking, discipline, and skill development. The Proyecto developed four character types that represented various levels of critical consciousness. These characters—Pedro, Chucho, Jacinto, and Jose for men, and Petra, Chucha, Jacinta, and

Josefa for women—were used in sociodramas (social dramas, or role play skits) to depict the range of responses to colonial and capitalist control.

Another major ideology for the Proyecto was that Puerto Ricans were fundamentally connected to other peoples and liberation struggles in the world. They advocated Black pride, their connections with African Americans in Harlem, and Puerto Rico's place in the rise of global capitalism. However, just as importantly, the Proyecto also emphasized the particularity of Puerto Rican history and identity. Thus, Cordero wrote that Puerto Ricans needed to embrace their Caribbean and mulato identities, but that they also needed to embrace their Puerto Rican identity.

The Proyecto began in the Barrio Tortugo neighborhood in Rio Piedras. Cordero explained that the purpose of the group was to “estudiar la realidad puertorriqueña, los procesos de resistencia al colonialismo y los procesos de descolonización para entender mejor como se puede tumbar el colonialismo” (study the Puerto Rican reality, the process of resistance to colonialism and processes of decolonization, in order to better understand how to break down colonialism).²⁸ According to a *San Juan Star* profile of the group,

The project a year ago to study the effects of “colonialism” on Puerto Rico’s lower classes. The group claims to be working not only in Tortugo, but also in an urban slum, a public housing project and a mountain community—all cross-sections of the people they are trying to reach. They would not tell the visitor in what other communities they were working because, “We don’t want any one coming around and bothering us.”²⁹

²⁸ Judith Pagani, “Juez Absuelve de Dos Cargos a Dra. Cordero,” *El Mundo* newspaper, April 3, 1968, San Juan, Puerto Rico, p. 1. Accessed from Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Clippings, 1967-1971. MC 824, folder E.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “People with Purpose: Revolution,” *San Juan Star*, 1968. MC 824, folder 1.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The Proyecto used a scientific process in order to understand the social realities of poor communities in Puerto Rico. The Proyecto eventually spread to communities such as Vietnam, Vega Baja, and Juana Matos.

Applying tools from the social sciences, and especially anthropology, the early members of the Proyecto, several of whom were former college students, went to live in poor communities throughout Puerto Rico. Once in these communities, Proyecto members would conduct in-depth surveys that they used to better understand the community, but which were also a way to identify potential members of the group. The *San Juan Star* profile of the Proyecto describes the importance of these studies to the group, and notes that the Proyecto's workspace

Has a filing cabinet with what Ana Livia calls the "best sociological library on Puerto Rico in Puerto Rico." She said the group has studies that have never been published. There are also books on the social and political history of the island.³⁰

Cordero brought social scientists and other professionals to early Proyecto meetings to train members in the correct methods. These trainers included the anthropologists Carlos Buitrago, Rafael Ramirez and Howard Stanton; the social worker and activist Carmen Rivera de Alvarado (who was the director of the University of Puerto Rico School of Social Work); and Rene Marques, a writer affiliated with the la Division de Educacion de la Comunidad (Division of Education for the Community), or DIVEDCO, an agency created under Muñoz Marín's Populares party that used the arts as an educational tool for the public good, and which was consciously modeled on similar New Deal programs in the United States.³¹ Members used participant observation methods to understand others and themselves, their everyday life and

³⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "People with Purpose: Revolution," *San Juan Star*, 1968. MC 824, folder 1.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Memoir of Proyecto member Efrain Negron, n.d. MC 824, folder 4.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

problems, as well as their place in the social structure, especially in terms of class, race, and gender. The *San Juan Star* article explained, “Besides collecting sociological data on the people in these places the group’s method is to mix with them for a first hand knowledge of their problems.”³² For the Proyecto, liberation would be achieved through in-depth investigations into, and discussions about, Puerto Rican reality.

Proyecto also relied on the use of the scientific method. The Proyecto utilized and encouraged thorough logical thinking, analysis, and evaluation as a part of their organizing and political education program. Proyecto members surveyed community members about a range of social issues, and as they conducted the surveys, they also identified potential members to recruit. During the Proyecto’s long political education sessions, social problems would be analyzed as objectively as possible, with an eye towards identifying the forces that determined what the Proyecto called “reality.” Proyecto documents and former members talk repeatedly about how the group helped them to “entender la realidad” (understand reality). Once Proyecto members understood reality, they asked themselves, “what is to be done?” Using the scientific method, the Proyecto proposed a strategy that was crafted with the problem, or reality, in mind; they implemented this strategy based on a detailed plan of action; and then they evaluated their work collectively and transparently, to identify what needed to be changed to more adequately address the problem. Cordero’s scientific approach should also be traced to her methodical and precise training as a dancer and doctor, and relationships with various prominent social scientists.

Cordero and the Proyecto used a care-oriented approach to organizing. In other words, there are many examples of the way that Cordero and Proyecto members cared for—and

³² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “People with Purpose: Revolution,” *San Juan Star*, 1968. MC 824, folder 1.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

celebrated with—each other as friends would. This approach helped the Proyecto reach populations in Puerto Rico that were being under-engaged by other political movements. Many of the people I interviewed mentioned Cordero’s adaptability—her ability to talk to people at all levels of consciousness. In addition, interviewees commented on Cordero’s dedication and tireless work ethic. Her adaptability and commitment made her an effective leader.

The Proyecto practiced consensus-based decision-making and it aimed to make processes as democratic as possible. A Proyecto document that explains “what the people need to do” states that there needs to be a plan where “all participate to make and control.” In addition, the document discusses “establishing realizable goals that are evaluated periodically.” Indeed, there are other Proyecto documents that get into this process of evaluation in detail, especially using the scientific method. In a document entitled, “El metodo cientifico para evaluar” (The scientific method in evaluations), the steps for an objective evaluation of work done by members in the Proyecto include: “establishing measures beforehand; describe what was done or what happened objectively; measure what was done or happened; summarize; arrive at conclusions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the completed action.”³³ This interest in thinking objectively was related to the Proyecto’s goal of being able to understand reality before they could change it. As explained in another document entitled, “Plan General del Programa de Adiestramiento” (General Plan for the Training Program), “El propósito del adiestramiento del pueblo tiene que ser desarrollar un individuo que entienda la realidad del conflicto entre el pueblo y el sistema”³⁴ (The purpose of the training of the people must be to develop an individual who understands the

³³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Guides, plans, methodologies for work, 1967-1974, MC 824, folder E.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Guides, plans, methodologies for work, 1967-1974, MC 824, folder E.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

reality of the conflict between the people and the system). The Proyecto prioritized the comprehension of the “reality of conflict” which was constantly operating within society. Paulo Freire also placed emphasis on the importance of understanding reality. He wrote “In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform.”³⁵ It is likely that Cordero was directly or indirectly shaped by Freire’s ideas.

One Proyecto document not only describes the goals and methods of the people, but also the goals and methods of the oppressive system. According to a table entitled, “El conflicto para desarrollar entendimiento, control y creatividad” (conflict as a way of developing understanding, control, and creativity), the purpose of the system is to “develop a person who submits to being exploited.”³⁶ Meanwhile, the purpose of the people is to “develop a person who wants to and can struggle—who understands, controls in a creative way and exercises leadership.” The Proyecto focused on developing people who not only desired struggle, but people who could dedicate themselves to the struggle. This meant that members had to develop understanding, control, creativity, and personal leadership. This goal of creating individuals who were strong and had their own leadership potential was an important focus of the group. The table goes on to describe in detail what the people need to do to achieve their purpose, and the left side concurrently describes what the system does to control and exploit people.

After a few pages, there is a summary of “what the people need to do.”³⁷ The summary begins by reiterating the overall purpose of the people: “Motivar – Reforzar Valores del Pueblo

³⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, Seabury Press, 1968), 49.

³⁶ Most Proyecto documents are in Spanish, and in my writing, I will sometimes use only my English translation and not the original Spanish quotation from the primary source document.

³⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Guides, plans, methodologies for work, 1967-1974, MC 824, folder E.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Que Aumenten su Necesidad de Luchar y Su Sentido de Poder Hacerlo” (Motivate – Reinforce Values of the People that Increase their need to struggle and their sense of being able to do it). This demonstrates that the very first step in the Proyecto’s work was personal transformation. People needed to recognize that there was a problem and then they needed to see themselves as capable of creating change to address that problem. Under this first point about motivation, are two others that should be highlighted. One is that the Proyecto believed that people needed to be stimulated to positively identify with their community and its goals. The second is that the people needed to “develop a positive self-image of intelligence, strength, and control.” This resonates with subsequent points in the summary that explain how people must learn and use tools that develop creativity, mental control, and physical control. Indeed, one of the Proyecto’s comic books, or paquines, entitled *Manela*, tells the story of a woman whose identification with her community gives her the strength and pride to stay and struggle alongside her neighbors. The second point in the summary further reiterates the importance of personal development as a foundation for effective political work.

Another point in the summary of “what the people need to do” states that the people need to “function with rational mechanisms of kindness.” This demonstrates the group’s focus on undermining capitalism by foregrounding humanity. Efrain Negrón has written the following about the human-centered approach of the group:

La lucha contra el sistema capitalista moderno, como la lucha con cualquier sistema economico basado en la explotacion del hombre por el hombre, va mas alla de tratar de cambiar las condiciones economicas injustas que ese sistema social promueve. La lucha es tambien contra las relaciones poco humanas que ese sistema crea.³⁸

(The struggle against the modern capitalist system, like the struggle with whichever economic system based on exploitation of man by other men, is more than just about trying to change the unjust economic conditions that that social system promotes. The struggle is also against the not-very-human relations that that system creates).

³⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Memoir of Proyecto member Efrain Negrón, n.d.. MC 824, folder 4.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

What was particularly revolutionary about the Proyecto was its human-centered approach. The human-centered approach of the Proyecto would have been especially attractive to working class communities throughout the island who already had strong social bonds that promoted collective survival in spite of minimal or non-existent state support.

Almost fifty years after the Proyecto's founding, the words of former members emphasized the interplay between the personal and political during their time with the organization. Colacho was one of the young people recruited from Barrio Tortugo. He explained that he had not been involved in political work before encountering the Proyecto, but that he became involved through the group's music workshops. He said the goal of the Proyecto was to "organizer la gente pobre...proletariado, no es? Organizarlo, envolverlo, darle entendimiento de las cosas"³⁹ (organize poor people...the proletariat, isn't it? Organize them, involve them, give them an understanding of things). Isabelita, who still lives in Juana Matos, one of the first communities that the Proyecto worked in, explained that the group's goals were "enseñarnos, enseñar a gente que no estaba enseñada, que no tenía alternativa, nos dieron alternativa...que mi barrio es lindo...que yo tenía uno derechos...habian derecho y habian que respetarse"⁴⁰ (to teach us, to teach the people that were not taught, that did not have an alternative, they gave us an alternative...that my neighborhood is beautiful...that I had rights...that there were rights and they needed to be respected). Papo, who grew up in the sugar cane producing region of Vega Baja, and who still organizes to raise awareness around indigenous heritage in Puerto Rico, made a powerful statement about how the Proyecto compared to other groups that advocated for Puerto Rican independence at the time. He said, "ella por primera vez me bajó del concepto de la

³⁹ Colacho, interview by Sandy Placido in Puerto Rico, 7/15/13.

⁴⁰ Isabelita, interview by Sandy Placido in Puerto Rico, 7/15/13.

independencia nada mas como independencia política al concepto social. Entonces yo dije, ah bueno, con esta gente sí hay que trabajar, entonces tiene uno algo que hacer”⁴¹ (she for the first time took me down from the concept of independence as only political independence, to the social concept [of independence]. So I said, well then, with these people I need to work, now we will have something to do). These statements emphasize the concepts of understanding, empowerment, and alternative paradigms of independence and liberation that underlie the Proyecto’s artistic materials.

The Proyecto spoke at length about “instituciones socialisantes” (socializing institutions), institutions such as schools, the media, and the church, that promoted the political goals of society. According to the philosophy promoted by the Proyecto, schools were places where people not only acquired technical and professional knowledge, but where students developed “valores y metodos que permiten al estudiante llenar el rol social que le va a corresponder en esa sociedad” (values and methods that allow the student to fit the social role that will correspond to them in that society). Thus, socializing institutions prepared individuals, from birth, to accept not only the structure of their society but their role in that society as well. The Proyecto pointed out in its documents that both bourgeoisie and socialist societies used pedagogies meant to maintain a particular societal structure, and they explained that a socialist society that used a bourgeoisie pedagogy would produce counterrevolutionaries.

Proyecto documents compared the educational and training goals of a capitalist system to the educational and training goals of a people working towards liberation. They explained,

El sistema capitalista para lograr sus propositos adiestra a los individuos proletarios para que se sometan a ser explotados a traves de un largo proceso que comienza cuando nace el niño y utilizando todas las instituciones de control (supraestructura).

⁴¹ Papo, interview by Sandy Placido in Puerto Rico, 7/17/13.

(The capitalist system, in order to achieve its purposes, trains proletarian individuals to be exploited through a long process that begins when the child is born and using all the institutions of control (superstructure)).

The mention of superstructure is one of the ways we see the Marxist influence on the Proyecto ideology. This quotation is explaining how the socializing institutions of a capitalist system have the goal of creating individuals who submit to the exploitation of their labor. The system makes these people “impotent and dependent on authority.” According to the Proyecto, the system also wants to make sure that people do not understand reality; do not feel the need to struggle; do not control their mental and physical skills; are not creative; and do not function independently of authority.

Meanwhile, this document explains that the pueblo, or the people, in order to achieve its goal of liberation, needs to, in turn, train itself. The Proyecto believed that this training needed to be short, efficient and effective, and opposite of capitalist training, in terms of purpose, content, and form. The Proyecto’s purpose when training members was to develop an individual that understood the reality of the conflict between the capitalist system and the people; needed to change that reality; and knew how to change that system. In addition to understanding reality and being motivated, the Proyecto expected members to exercise leadership independent of authority; control in creative ways the skills necessary to achieve a new society; and develop self-discipline.

The Marxism developed by the Proyecto was an empirical or practical Marxism that analyzed class structure and struggle from a perspective that was grounded in every day experience. The Proyecto believed that people should start where they were, crafting solutions to their most immediate problems. In other words, they felt that action should be determined by what needed to be done in the moment—that theory needed to emerge from practice, and that practice, or action, should not be based on strict adherence to preconceived theories that were

created outside of the context where the work was taking place. Although this scientific and objective approach to societal analysis and political action was influenced by Marxist methodologies, according to several accounts, Cordero and the Proyecto barely referred to Marx at all.

Efrain Negron, a former Proyecto member, has written about his experience within the group, highlighting its relationship to Marxism:

El acercamiento marxista del proyecto fue uno muy distinto al acercamiento marxista tradicional al que yo conocia de mi experiencia dentro del MPI y la FUPI. Me explico, en el Proyecto nunca hubo una arenga o discusion de los textos marxistas. Entiendo que esto fue asi para evitar el dogmatismo...En el Proyecto el enfasis fue en el analisis de la realidad politico-social nuestra desde una perspectiva critica...Se intentaba desarrollar una actitud cientifica, que nos llevara a cuestionarnoslo todo.⁴²

(The Marxist approach of the Proyecto was one very different from the traditional Marxist approach that I knew from my experience within the MPI and FUPI. I mean, in the Proyecto there was never a speech or discussion of Marxist texts...In the Proyecto the emphasis was on the analysis of our politico-social reality from a critical perspective...We tried to develop a scientific attitude, which would cause us to question everything.)

Negron's description indicates the importance the Proyecto placed on analyzing reality objectively and using critical thinking. It was from the cycle of observation and interpretation that the Proyecto developed their ideas and methods. This process is what the Proyecto referred to in their documents as the scientific method. The Proyecto's empirical, practical Marxism allowed the group to develop a class struggle analysis that was specific to the realities and conditions of Puerto Rico. This approach is particularly evident in the content and form of the art developed by the group. The art utilized colloquial, Spanish language and popular visual and musical forms to tell the stories of individuals who were marginalized within Puerto Rico.

Several former Proyecto members I have interviewed have commented on how they joined the group because it was a refreshing change from other political groups on the island at

⁴² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Memoir of Proyecto member Efrain Negron, n.d.. MC 824, folder 4.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

the time, even the ones that were fighting for political independence. David Pagán, an early member of the Proyecto, said the following in an interview:

Yo oía tanta blah blah blah de lo político...términos que yo no entendía un carajo, muchas palabras. Pero la única persona que en ese momento yo dije coño por lo menos entiendo más de la mitad de lo que dice, fue Ana. Ella hablaba de otra forma diferente a como hablaba...esto independentista.⁴³

9I used to hear so much blah blah blah from politicians...terms that I didn't understand, a lot of words. But the only person in that moment, I said damn, at least I understand more than half of what she is saying, was Ana. She talked in a way that was different from how...these independentistas talked).

Pagán commented on issues that made the Proyecto an important challenge not only to United States imperialism, but to the status quo within the Puerto Rican left at the time. Cordero intended to respond to the domination of people who were white, middle-class, formally educated, and male in the Puerto Rican political landscape at the time. This is why Proyecto documents consistently forefront the experiences of poor, marginalized women and men of color.

The approach taken by the Proyecto, in large part thanks to Cordero's efforts, is historically significant because of the methods used and the people worked with during this particular time in Puerto Rico's history. Negron reflects,

La lucha politica se convierte asi en la lucha por la supervivencia de nosotros como individuos en una sociedad que impide el mejor desarrollo como seres humanos. La gran contribucion de Ana fue que no solo señalo el camino hacia esa realizacion del progreso humano, sino que dedico sus energias a desarrollar los mecanismos o instrumentos que facilitaran la implementacion a esos fines.⁴⁴

(The political struggle thus becomes the struggle for our survival as individuals in a society that prevents our best development as human beings. The great contribution of Ana was not only that she pointed the way towards that realization of human progress, but that she devoted her energies to developing the mechanisms or instruments to facilitate the implementation of those purposes).

⁴³ David Pagán, interview by Sandy Placido in Puerto Rico, 7/16/13.

⁴⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Memoir of Proyecto member Efrain Negron, n.d.. MC 824, folder 4.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Thus, Cordero not only had a vision, she put in the work to create the tools and methods to develop the leadership of Proyecto members. It will become clear that many of the Proyecto's "mechanisms or instruments" are still very relevant today.

Surveillance Diasporas, Repression, and Resistance

The Proyecto's innovative methods, and the populations they targeted, made them a target of intense police surveillance and repression. This repression forced the organization to find creative, but also clandestine, ways to continue their work as activists in the 1970s and 1980s. Given their relation to the U.S. as both a foreign and domestic people, Puerto Ricans faced a particular form of transnational Cold War surveillance. The concept of "surveillance diasporas" gets at the way Puerto Ricans, as migrating colonial subjects, were tracked as they moved across spaces that were foreign, domestic, and sometimes both (in the case of the United States). The FBI and Puerto Rican police shared information with each other, and the gaps that arise given certain limits in the powers and access of these separate, yet intertwined, agencies.

The Puerto Rican police department aggressively tracked the Proyecto, and in interviews, people like Efrain Negrón shared the experience of being followed twenty-four hours a day. On February 29, 1968, police raided the Proyecto house in Barrio Tortugo. At the time, the Proyecto was holding a meeting for about fifty community members. Twenty-three individuals were arrested, and eleven were charged with crimes.⁴⁵ The arrest, according to *El Mundo*, was because Cordero and her comrades fell upon a police car driving through their neighborhood on February

⁴⁵ Antonio Santiago and Roberto Betancourt, "Arrestan Cuatro; Detienen a Dieciocho," *El Mundo* newspaper, San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 29, 1968, p. 1. Accessed from Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Clippings, 1967-1971. MC 824, folder E.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

25th and 26th. Cordero grabbed one officer's notebook, where he had been taking notes on the group's activities.

In an April 3, 1968 *El Mundo* article related to the case, Cordero affirmed the following: "in the house where the arrests took place is where all the studies of the organization take place, that all of the accused, except for one, are members and organizers of the Proyecto and that since the program requires so much dedication the participants live almost the whole time in the house where they meet."⁴⁶ In the same article, Cordero also spoke about making complaints to the Puerto Rican Commission on Civil Rights about the abuses of the police, a year before the arrests occurred. The article describes what Cordero says happened on the night of the arrest: "The Project was having a meeting with 50 people, including people from the Tortugo neighborhood, when the police entered. According to the testimony of the accused, none of the police agents demonstrated any orderly behavior during the arrest."

The trial against Proyecto members lasted a year and a half, and stories related to the case were on the front page of Puerto Rican newspapers on more than one occasion. Proyecto members fought the case aggressively and strategically, creating long lists of lawyers who could help them, contacts who could contribute financially, and detailed notes about what happened during the raid, including what was taken and broken by the police. By August of 1969, all of the Proyecto members were absolved, and a March 12, 1970 article of *El Mundo* reported that the Commission of Civil Rights declared that the civil rights of Cordero and her group were indeed violated by the police.

In the summer of 1968, as Proyecto members were undergoing trial, Cordero received a visit from one of the major leaders of the Black Power movement. James Forman, his wife, and

⁴⁶ *El Mundo*, San Juan, Puerto Rico, April 3, 1968.

child visited and stayed with Cordero in 1968. James Forman was a leader in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and in the acknowledgements section of his book, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, published in 1972, Cordero is the third person he thanks. Forman writes an entire paragraph, describing Cordero as “a Puerto Rican militant and doctor who taught me to always affirm the blackness of Puerto Ricans and to understand that they suffer the same general oppression as black people in the United States.” Like she did for Mayfield, Cordero supported Forman in his writing. Forman continued, “Ana Livia found in Puerto Rico a rest and work place for me by the Caribbean Sea, where most of this book was written.” While playing host, Cordero made sure to share information with her guests that would contextualize their stay. This was yet another individual connection that Cordero made that served as a basis for larger connections between movements. Forman ended his praise of Cordero in the following way: “While in Puerto Rico, I learned much about its people, and a study of that colonization helped me to better understand what has happened to those of us who live inside the mainland of the United States. My many conversations with Ana Livia, who worked in Africa and attended the first Tri-Continental Conference held in Cuba, have had a tremendous impact upon my life. Today she is busy in the Puerto Rican liberation struggle, indivisible from the struggle on the mainland.”⁴⁷

Around the time that Forman and his family stayed with Cordero, Doña Vivi wrote to Mayfield. On September 2, 1969, she complained to Mayfield about her daughter: “She is as naïve as that with that intelligence she has...I should start to think about the future of these kids and forget about her.” Doña Vivi asked Mayfield to find out what school in Puerto Rico his sons attended, when they visited him in New York. Doña Viví wrote, “my daughter gave me as an

⁴⁷ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, (University of Washington Press, 1997 [originally published 1972]), xxii.

excuse for not telling me their address that I might tell somebody else who in turn will tell the police.” Cordero’s mother sounded concerned about her grandchildren’s reaction to the “crazy living,” but given the twenty-four hour a day surveillance and associated repression that Cordero had faced, some of this paranoia was justified.

In 1971, the Proyecto’s house in Barrio Tortugo was bombed. In a 1971 New York Times article, Cordero is described as “an Independentista physician who works with the poor in the barrio of Tortugo.” Cordero was speaking out because anti-independence groups were attacking “her home and the home of friends” after a string of events that included a university student riot led by the youth division of the Puerto Rican Independence party, a bombing that killed three people at the University of Puerto Rico’s Reserve Officers Training Corps building, and a direct action led by the Independence party on Culebra island, a U.S. Navy “target practice area.”⁴⁸ The house in Tortugo was destroyed, and Proyecto members could not return to the neighborhood. Marcia Stehr was a Proyecto member who was from the United States but lived in Puerto Rico since her mother had started the island’s Montessori school. Stehr’s mother allowed Proyecto members to stay at her home following the attack in Barrio Tortugo. Following several years of intense repression, the Proyecto went underground and throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Members worked in other parts of the island, especially in the south, using an intricate array of safety measures, such as security houses and pseudonyms.

Cordero and the Proyecto negotiated extreme repression and surveillance from the police, while still maintaining a radical sense of humanity and locally-grounded struggle. Cordero’s Puerto Rican police file, or *carpeta*, as it is called on the island, reveals several themes. The first is the structure and practice of international surveillance sharing. The Puerto Rican police

⁴⁸ Martin Arnold, “San Juan Rioting and Bomb Studied,” in *The New York Times*, March 16, 1971, 22.

intelligence division produced the bulk of Cordero's surveillance files, sharing their findings with the FBI in the United States. However, in some instances, the FBI provided information about Cordero to the Puerto Rican police. In addition, the Puerto Rican police could glean intelligence about Cordero during the time she was in Ghana, mostly by intercepting letters between her and individuals in Puerto Rico, and taking note of moments when she came back to visit Puerto Rico. However, there are gaps in Cordero's files that exhibit the limits of surveillance for a migrating colonial subject traveling across a variety of colonial landscapes. There are multi-faceted meanings behind some of the meticulously-noted, or what Carol Boyce Davies in her book on the Trinidadian organizer Claudia Jones calls "excessive," details in Cordero's police file.⁴⁹ The juxtaposition of the mundane, the exaggerated, and the problematic says as much about Cordero and the Proyecto as it does about Cold War surveillance culture and everyday Puerto Rican life.

Puerto Ricans, depending on where they were, faced surveillance from the Puerto Rican police, the FBI, and the CIA, and in many cases, these agencies collaborated with each other.⁵⁰ For a fifty-year period starting in the mid-1930s, the Puerto Rican police intelligence division created carpetas, or files, on over 100,000 nationalists, independentistas, and other pro-independence sympathizers on the island, and many of these carpetas were developed with assistance from the FBI. Surveillance on the island led to extreme repression of nationalists such as Pedro Albizu Campos, especially in the 1930s and 1950s. This surveillance was accompanied by laws such as the ley de la mordaza, or the gag law, which criminalized any public support for independence (such as waving flags), and was modeled after the Smith Act in the United States.

⁴⁹ See Carol Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*.

⁵⁰ For more on surveillance in Puerto Rico, see Marisol LeBrón, "Carpeteo Redux: Surveillance and Subversion against the Puerto Rican Student Movement," in *Radical History Review*, Volume 2017, Number 128: 147-172.

As the scholar Rene Francisco Poitevin notes, the Puerto Rican independence movement was one of the earliest targets of the FBI's COINTELPRO, or counter intelligence program, preceded only by the Communist Party USA. This is in line with the way Puerto Rico has been used as a site of imperial and repressive experimentation under U.S. control. According to Poitevin, "in August 1960, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sent a memo to the agency's field office in San Juan officially establishing the COINTELPRO program in Puerto Rico." However, Poitevin also explains that FBI surveillance in Puerto Rico dates to the 1930s, and he explains how by 1936, "a year after the FBI's official creation, Puerto Rican intelligence officers" were receiving "training and were graduating from the FBI academy."⁵¹

An analysis of the carpetas of Cordero and other Proyecto members reveals various themes. One is the extensive information sharing taking place between the FBI and the Puerto Rican police. Second, given the lack of technology at the time, the production of these files required physical presence. Police literally had to follow Cordero or sit outside of the houses where she and Proyecto members met. They also recruited and interviewed informants, and produced comprehensive reports of their findings. However, Cordero and the Proyecto did not simply work around the repression, they also responded to it. Following the raid and arrests in 1968, Proyecto members began compiling information in order to file a complaint against the excessive surveillance they faced with the Puerto Rican Commission for Civil Rights. Even more importantly, Cordero's work investigating the 1978 murder of two independentistas at Cerro Maravilla led to the dismantling of the Puerto Rican intelligence agency, marking a turning point in the way in which the independence movement was viewed on the island.

⁵¹ René Francisco Poitevin, "Political Surveillance, State Repression, and Class Resistance: The Puerto Rican Experience," *Social Justice*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (81), Fall 2000, pp. 89-100

Chapter Four

Pride and Politics through Art

Somos jóvenes, somos negros, somos de la costa y del arrabal. Somos el pueblo y expresamos la realidad que vivimos.¹

(We are young, we are black, we are of the coast and from the slums/outskirts. We are the people and we express the reality we live).

-From the Proyecto's comic book, *Manela*

The Proyecto especially emphasized Black Pride, and an acceptance and celebration of African heritage in Puerto Rican culture, as well as Puerto Rican connections with the rest of the African diaspora, especially Black Americans in the United States. According to Efrain Negron, one of the early members of the Proyecto, the group's form of organizing amongst the poor on the island was revolutionary. Early members of the Proyecto conducted interviews with individuals in the communities, to learn more about their political ideas, visions, and realities. Through these conversations, members of the Proyecto could identify and recruit members. Thus, the Proyecto combined popular education, social science, and Marxist methods to identify and develop the leadership of individuals in some of the most marginalized communities in Puerto Rico. The Proyecto used visual arts, music, and theater extensively, to understand and represent reality in their class-based analysis of society.

Black Pride and Afro-diasporic alliance building were major parts of the Proyecto's work, and Cordero's beliefs and experiences greatly influenced this approach. Cordero expressed her views on the global black struggle in a speech she gave in January of 1967, on the occasion of Stokely Carmichael's visit to Puerto Rico. Carmichael, a Black Power leader and chairman of

¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "Manela." MC 824, folder 3.3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee at the time, was visiting the island as an act of solidarity. One of the stops during his trip was the University of Puerto Rico, where Cordero was tasked with introducing him. Cordero took this duty seriously, preparing an 18 page speech entitled, “El Poder para los Negros,” (the power for the Blacks), in which she presented “una vision global de la historia del pueblo negro de los Estados Unidos que nos ayude a ubicarla en el contexto de nuestra propia realidad” (a global vision of the history of the black people of the United States which will help us situate it in the context of our own reality). Cordero made clear that there are shared economic roots that explain, number one, the colonialism, and number two, the racial and cultural discrimination faced by Puerto Ricans, and what Cordero calls, “Afro-North Americans.” Throughout her speech, Cordero highlights how economic changes at a global level affected the Afro-North American community, and in her analysis, she points out moments where the Puerto Rican community faced comparable oppression due to the same imperial forces which use racism at the service of capitalism.

The speech begins with a section on the struggle against slavery. Cordero explained that the sixteenth century slave trade took place at the same time that Europe was in its nascent stage of capitalism, mercantile capitalism. Europe developed during this time by taking material and human resources from the continent, and Cordero makes clear that the slave trade and slave labor also allowed the United States to develop its own capitalist system. Cordero then goes on to explain how this economic development of the U.S. led to landowners, intellectuals, and a nascent industrial bourgeoisie coming together to liberate themselves from England. Blacks joined this fight for independence, thinking it would benefit them, when in fact it was the new colonial elite who was fighting to protect their interests. Cordero goes on to describe the rise of the abolitionist movement, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. During this period, she identifies

two political strains in the Black community: the nationalist and integrationist strain, and she notes that it is interesting that the nationalist consciousness in the United States is arising at the same time that there is a nationalist strain arising in Puerto Rico.

The document contains an outline that, in typical Cordero fashion, presents her ideas in an orderly and methodical way. The first section of the document covers the struggle against slavery, starting with the American Revolutionary War, and ending with Reconstruction. The next section is entitled, “De la esclavitud a la segregacion” (From slavery to segregation), and contains three intriguing subheadings: “Bajo la hegemonia del capital industrial del norte” (Under the hegemony of industrial capital of the north); “El inicio del imperialismo en los Estados Unidos” (The beginning of imperialism in the United States); and “La primera crisis del imperialismo” (The first crisis of imperialism). The third section of the speech is “El period moderno” (The modern period), covering third world anti-imperialist struggle, and “the struggle of the Afro-North American” in which Cordero discusses the work of Martin Luther King, Robert Williams, Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and student activist in the United States South. The last section of the document poses the question, “What importance does the claim of Black Power have for Puerto Ricans?” The document seems almost uncanny in its ability to articulate and describe a developing history. The historiography she lays out is compelling when considered alongside the work of historians since.

Cordero began the document with the argument that it was important for Puerto Ricans to understand Black history because of the experiences of discrimination, poverty, and “violence in all of its possible manifestations”² that both groups face in the United States. She emphasized “the necessity of understanding better the reality of that community, linked so intimately with

² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Analyses of racial issues in United States, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, 1968?, 1979, 1985. MC 824, folder 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. .

ours by history.”³ In making this point, Cordero surely reflected on her time living in New York City, as well as her relationship with Mayfield and other African Americans. She also acknowledged that both Puerto Ricans and African Americans shared a common history. This is an important point which highlights not only the history of these groups in shared spaces, but which shows how common forces of imperialism and racism connected communities that were far from each another.

Cordero situated Puerto Ricans in the fight for Civil Rights and Black Power in the United States when she wrote,

Ya muchos puertorriqueños estabamos alla a fines de los 50s cuando en el Sur de los Estados Unidos ocurrieron las grandes manifestaciones contra la segregacion racial y recientemente hemos participado junto a ellos en las explosiones de coraje de los motines raciales en las ciudades del Norte.⁴

(Many Puerto Ricans were already there in the late 50s when in the southern United States large demonstrations occurred against racial segregation and recently we have participated with them in the angry outbursts of racial riots in northern cities).

Cordero declared that Puerto Ricans have been involved in racial struggles in both the northern and southern parts of the United States. Cordero reinserted Puerto Ricans into the Civil Rights and Black Power historical narrative, reminding readers and listeners that Puerto Ricans have also been affected by anti-black oppression, and that they have mobilized in response.

Cordero made another important connection between the struggle of Blacks and Puerto Ricans when she highlighted that Blacks could be considered an internal colony of the United States. She wrote,

se ha postulado que no se trata solo de discrimen contra una minoria racial que es una parte de la sociedad Norteamericana, sino que se trata de la opresion y el discrimen contra otro pueblo que tambien se encuentra dentro de los E.U. Esta interpretacion modificaria nuestra vision sobre la

³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Analyses of racial issues in United States, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, 1968?, 1979, 1985. MC 824, folder 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Analyses of racial issues in United States, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, 1968?, 1979, 1985. MC 824, folder 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

naturaleza politica de la lucha del Afronorteamericano y su relacion con los pueblos del tercer mundo: de Africa, Asia y Latinoamerica.⁵

(It is not just about discrimination against a racial minority, but against another nation within the United States, which modifies our vision regarding the political nature of the Afro-North American struggle and its relation with the peoples of the Third World, Africa, Asia and Latin America).

By describing “Afro-North Americans” as a nation within the United States, and not just a racial minority, Cordero argued that there is even more of a basis for the Afro-North American community to unite with the nations of the Third World, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It is also important to note the specificity with which Cordero referred to African Americans. By specifying North America, she made a clear point about not conflating North and South America and the Caribbean under the term “America.” Saying Afro-North America allows for terms like Afro-Caribbean and Afro-South America, and it reminds us that there are black people across the Americas, and not just in the United States.

The most powerful part of Cordero’s talk was when she began to think about what Black Power meant for the people of Puerto Rico. She wrote,

En este trabajo trazaremos una vision global de la historia del pueblo negro de los Estados Unidos que nos ayude a ubicarla en el contexto de nuestra propia realidad. Trataremos de contestarnos las siguientes preguntas:

1. Que importancia tiene el reclamo de poder negro para el pueblo puertorriqueño en Puerto Rico y en los Estados Unidos?
2. Que importancia tiene para los pueblos del tercer mundo?⁶

(In this work we will trace a global vision of the history of the black community in the United States that will help us situate it in the context of our own reality. We will try to answer the following questions.

1. What importance does the claim Black Power have for the Puerto Rican community in Puerto Rico and the United States?
2. What importance does this claim have for the communities of the Third World?)

⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Analyses of racial issues in United States, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, 1968?, 1979, 1985. MC 824, folder 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Analyses of racial issues in United States, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, 1968?, 1979, 1985. MC 824, folder 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Cordero was asking, what did Black Power mean to Puerto Ricans and communities in the Third World? She was asking what Black Power would look like in these communities, and what the implications of a Black Power movement would be. Cordero told Black history from a global standpoint in this document, which placed her in conversation with historians such as Eric Williams and John Henrik Clarke. Cordero also wrote that she wanted to situate Puerto Rican history “in the context of our own reality.” This shows that Cordero was foregrounding an approach in which history is told from a Puerto Rican perspective, a meaningful intervention given that, as a peripheral space with an ambiguous political status, the island is often left out of narratives of United States *and* Latin American history.

At the end of her talk, Cordero began to answer the question she posed about the importance of Black Power for Puerto Ricans. She explained,

La historia del Afronorteamericano guarda paralelos claros con la nuestra y este recuento pone al desnudo la verdadera y terrible naturaleza de la sociedad norteamericana y las raíces económicas del coloniaje y de la opresión y el discrimin racial y cultural contra ambos pueblos.⁷

(The history of the Afro-North American has clear parallels with ours and this account lays bare the true and terrible nature of American society and the economic roots of colonialism and oppression and racial and cultural discrimination against both peoples).

Cordero pointed out the shared history between the two communities. In addition, she also discussed that the roots of colonialism, oppression, and racial and cultural discrimination were economic. This was powerful claim, and it demonstrates Cordero’s viewpoint regarding the nature of capitalism, and how it maintained structures such as racism and colonialism. Cordero continued, describing how Puerto Rican migration to the United States (caused by colonialism) exposed Puerto Ricans to discrimination and oppression in the United States, while also creating an opportunity to unite with others to fight against the “common oppressor.”

⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Analyses of racial issues in United States, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, 1968?, 1979, 1985. MC 824, folder 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Cordero commented on what prevented the logical unity between Puerto Rican and Black communities. She wrote that the problem was the “negation of our reality as a mulato and Caribbean people.” She added, “we all intimately know the racism against ourselves which makes us want to be white.” Cordero ended her introduction for Carmichael with a few words from Fidel Castro. She wrote,

Fue Fidel Castro quien dijo en Harlem que “...los pueblos del Caribe somos todos Afroamericanos bajo la bota del Imperialismo Yanki.”⁸

(It was Fidel Castro in Harlem who said that “... the Caribbean people are all African Americans under the boot of Yankee Imperialism.”)

Like Fidel Castro, Cordero understood that imperialism, an advanced state of capitalism, was responsible for the racist acts that are committed against people of color across the Americas.⁹

The Proyecto’s Politics through Art

Cordero’s and the Proyecto’s ideologies manifested in the art they created. An analysis of the art produced—including music, plays, and visual art—reveals that these forms of popular education explained class structure and struggle in society; they provided examples of what an empowered individual looked and acted like; and they demonstrated and suggested various forms of liberation and independence. Materials collectively produced by Proyecto members exhibit how these ideas would have been transmitted on the ground, to ordinary members. The materials

⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Analyses of racial issues in United States, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, 1968?, 1979, 1985. MC 824, folder 2.23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. First published in 1917 in pamphlet form, Petrograd. Accessed at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>. Che Guevara also commented on the relationship between imperialism and capitalism when he said, “We must bear in mind that imperialism is a world system, the last stage of capitalism — and it must be defeated in a world confrontation.” Che Guevara, “Message to the Tricontinental”, The Executive Secretariat of the Organization of the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), Havana, April 16, 1967. Accessed at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1967/04/16.htm>

reveal how oppression operates at a broad level, and set forth paradigms of independence and liberation that presented alternative possibilities, while also highlighting what was revolutionary about practices that people were already engaged in.

Chucho, o, El derecho de vivir (Chucho, or, the Right to Live), described by the Proyecto as a “novela de teatro” (theatre novel or story) was written to describe the struggle of individuals in Juana Matos who were fighting to stay on their land.¹⁰ Juana Matos, right outside of San Juan in the municipality of Cataño, was a community of squatters from around the island who built houses on marshy land to live closer to the capital. Juana Matos was slated for destruction because a government agency called the CRUV (Corporación de Renovación Urbana y Vivienda/Urban Renewal and Housing Corporation) wanted to build caseríos, or public housing, in the area, and force individuals from Juana Matos to move into the caseríos. In interviews, people have told me that this is because the CRUV wanted to collect rent money from people who were living for free in houses they had constructed on vacant land, and because they wanted to relocate people from La Perla, an impoverished neighborhood uncomfortably close to the tourist sites of Old San Juan. The Proyecto chose to work in this community because they wanted to organize with a group of independently minded residents who wanted to stay in their homes instead of paying rent in an apartment building. Proyecto members who moved to Juana Matos organized with residents, collecting over seven hundred petition signatures, creating visual art, and writing and performing dramatic works such as *El derecho de vivir* to raise awareness and build leadership from within the community.

On the play’s second page, after a list of characters, it says “Esta novela ocurre en un arrabal de Cataño y es tomada de nuestra vida real. Fue escrita y producida por jóvenes y adultos

¹⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Chucho o El Derecho de Vivir: Novela de Teatro,” n.d. MC 824, folder 3.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

de Juana Matos” (this novela takes place in a slum of Cataño and it comes from our real life. It was written and produced by young people and adults from Juana Matos). This is followed by a few pages of narrative that describes some of the play’s characters in depth. It is here that we begin to see the Proyecto’s description of empowered individuals. They begin by describing a woman named Juana Matos in this way:

Juana Matos, mujer que vino de la costa (caña) establece allí un negocio donde se destila y se vende pitorro y frituras y comida. Doña Juana es una mujer independiente, negra, guapa. Habla lo que piensa sin remilgos, y se faja con cualquiera, sea mujer o hombre.

(Juana Matos, a woman who came from the coast (cane) establishes there a business where pitorro is distilled and sold along with fried snacks and food. Doña Juana is an independent woman, black, beautiful. She speaks what she thinks, and she can confront anyone, be they woman or man).

What is powerful about this description is the quick association between blackness, beauty, and independence. We see a woman who is economically independent, confident, outspoken, and unafraid of stepping out of her gender or race role to confront anyone, whether they are in a position of authority or not. Throughout the play, Juana Matos is a motivating force for others in the community, encouraging them to fearlessly fight back against the government. Indeed, Juana Matos probably sounds familiar to many of us from the Caribbean diaspora, full of so many strong, independent women, now as well as then (although many have gone undocumented). This is an example of the Proyecto describing a character that is not necessarily out of the ordinary, highlighting the revolutionary potential of who she already is.

Given Cordero’s political work throughout the African and Black diaspora, she made sure to emphasize the importance of Black pride and the connection to other Afro-descended communities. Thus, the Proyecto materials consistently demonstrate what the construction of Black Power in Puerto Rico looked like on the ground. The play’s introductory narrative describes three other black, empowered individuals. There’s Chucho, “un joven negro, fornido,

guapo” (a young, black, robust, handsome man), whose mother is active in a union for people who de-stem tobacco, and Pedro, “un hombre negro, fuerte, inteligente que...está dispuesto a luchar contra lo que sea y contra quien sea” (a black, strong, intelligent man...who is ready to fight against whatever and whoever). Again, in both examples, we have positive physical descriptions quickly transitioning into political descriptions, creating associations for readers or viewers that would have shed new light on familiar characteristics. Lolita, Chucho’s wife, is described as “joven, negra, hermosa, alegre...En la novela, Lolita llega a ser una mujer madura, segura de sí misma, independiente y fuerte” (young, black, beautiful, happy...In the story, Lolita becomes a mature woman, sure of herself, independent and strong). What is also important about these descriptions is that viewers and readers would have identified with them, since many early members of the Proyecto were indeed young and black. At the end of *Manela*, the comic book I will discuss next, there is this statement about the people who produced it:

Somos jóvenes, somos negros, somos de la costa y del arrabal. Somos el pueblo y expresamos la realidad que vivimos.¹¹

(We are young, we are black, we are of the coast and from the slums/outskirts. We are the people and we express the reality we live).

Thus, by describing the consciousness-strengthening process of characters such as Lolita, the Proyecto surely meant to provide models of liberation and understanding for the people they worked with.

The play also provides an understanding of how society works. Towards the end of the play, Lolita speaks excitedly:

Yo sé como la CRUV va a hacer chavos sacándonos de aquí. Este terreno que nosotros rellenamos, ahora vale mucho. Cuando nos saquen de aquí lo van a vender por millones.

(I know how the CRUV is going to make money by kicking us out of here. This land that we filled in, is now worth a lot. When they kick us out of here they will sell it for millions).

¹¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Manela.” MC 824, folder 3.3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Another character, Raul, reminds Lolita of the money that the government will make from charging them rent, and Pedro adds that the owner of the CRUV is also the owner of the company that constructs the caseríos and of another that sells cement. Chucho then adds an essential point, describing how this displacement and exploitation makes it harder to struggle collectively. He says,

Sí Lolita, y también a los dueños les conviene sacarnos de aquí porque si no tenemos casa propia nos pueden controlar y explotar en el trabajo. Yo he trabajado para ese Mister Rexach. Y como tenía mi casa segura pude dejar el trabajo cuando me ajoraron mucho.

(Yes Lolita, and also it benefits the owners to get us out of here because if we do not have our own house they can control and exploit us at work. I have worked for that Mr. Rexach. And since I had my own house, I was able to quit the job when they bothered me too much).

For the characters in the play, having their own place to live—that they own or which is already paid for—gives them the flexibility and stability that allows them to more fearlessly challenge authority. At the beginning of the play, Pedro and Doña Juana explain to Chucho where he can find a place to live, since he just moved from the countryside. Pedro says, “Mira, la única forma de independizarte aquí, de ser tu propio amo es cojiendo tierra por ahí y construyendo tu propia casa...nos metemos y construimos. Si somos muchos no nos pueden sacar” (Look, the only way to be independent here, to be your own master is to take some land and build your own house...we go in and build. If there are a lot of us they cannot kick us out). Doña Juana adds, “Mira, es la única forma de vivir independiente aquí. Uno con su propia casa no paga renta. Si no tiene trabajo, no lo pueden desahuciar” (Look, it's the only way to live independently here. One with his own house does not pay rent. If you do not have a job, they can't evict you). Both Pedro and Doña Juana are describing what independence means to them. It means not having to pay money to an external owner, having one's own home, and being able to challenge authority without fear. Especially in Puerto Rico, where political independence is such a central issue

throughout the twentieth century, it is important to see these characters discussing a different type of personal, everyday independence.

In addition to full length plays like *El Derecho de Vivir*, the Proyecto produced sociodramas, improvised role plays that were meant to teach members about realities and conflicts within society. One sociodrama, which Cordero included in the curriculum she wrote towards the end of her life, describes the process by which several individuals profit from the labor of one worker. As the sociodrama says, “todos viven de su trabajo.”¹² This sociodrama tracks how the workers only make ten dollars for every ten shirts, although the value of the same number of shirts, once sold to the consumer, is actually \$100. That means that the factory owner gets a cut of \$70, the wholesaler gets a cut of \$10, and the retailer gets a cut of \$10. Meanwhile, the worker’s husband has to spend all the money his wife made producing ten shirts just to buy one shirt. The sociodrama also explained how things backfire when workers demand more wages. Indeed, the factory owner could give the worker a raise, but then he or she raises prices in such a way that the workers’ increase is covered, and the owner is making an even bigger profit than before. The same happens to the wholesaler and retailer, as they also raise prices. When consumers complain that prices are going up, the workers are blamed when they were only demanding fair pay. In addition, the factory owner actually says that he cannot afford to pay all the workers at the new wages, and so he begins to mechanize and fire people, and now, the workers are making twice as much with the help of the machines, but they are paid the same. This sociodrama is particularly illuminating and inspiring in that it taught people exactly how their labor was being exploited by several people who did not actually do any of the work producing what was made. They simply controlled the price while distributing along the way.

¹² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Cursillo basico complete”. MC 824, folder 6.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Manela, a comic book produced by the Proyecto to challenge the mandatory draft of Puerto Ricans to the Vietnam War, also exhibits underlying ideas about societal understanding, empowerment, and alternative independence paradigms.¹³ The paquin, completed around 1968, with art by David Pagán, is about a woman named Manela who is radicalized after the death of her husband in Vietnam. She begins to question the economic and political structure of society during her time alone, working to support herself and her son. After her friend, Juanita, refuses to kiss the American boss at the bar where Manela and Juanita work, the boss slaps Juanita, calling her “Negra sucia” (dirty, black woman). This is a turning point for Manela, and by the end of the comic, she feels empowered, and she begins to embrace her black, barrio identity, and the necessity of political struggle. At this moment, we see the Proyecto promoting its own version of Black Power and Black Pride:

Manela miro por la ventana su barrio. Donde habia nacido y de donde habia pensado salir. Ahora Manela ve el barrio diferente a como pensaba antes. Ahora lo ve como es.

“Barrio, Barrio fuerte de gente negras, gente fuerte. Barrio, aqui estoy de Nuevo, con mi hijo.”

...

Meses atras se habia encontrado perdida, hasta ahora. Ahora Manela sabe quien es, como es y que va a hacer de su futuro.

Manela cae rendida por el sueño. Duerme ya preparada a seguir con mas fuerza luchando con su realidad. Le espera un nuevo día a Manela, la negra, la del barrio, a Manela la mujer, la madre.

(Manela looked out of the window at her neighborhood. Where he had been born and where he had planned to leave. Now Manela sees the different neighborhood as she had thought before.

Now you see it as it is.

“Neighborhood, strong neighborhood of black people, strong people. Neighborhood, here I am again, with my son.”

...

Months ago she had been lost, until now. Now Manela knows who she is, how she is and what she is going to do with her future.

Manela falls asleep in sleep. She sleeps already prepared to continue with more strength struggling with her reality. A new day is waiting for Manela, the black woman, the woman from the neighborhood, Manela the woman, the mother).

Manela sees her reality with new eyes, and again we see the connections being made between all

¹³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Comic book: "Manela," n.d. MC 824, folder 3.3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

the facets of Manela's identity: her blackness, her strength, her womanhood, her motherhood, and her class status, as a resident of a barrio. The alternative possibility offered here, in terms of liberation and independence, is of moving forward towards a future where people bring together all aspects of themselves, working where they are, and starting with what they have. Part of what is revolutionary about this vision is that people must accept themselves before they embark on the path of societal transformation. Manela had to see that her personal identity was not just the way she looked, it was also related to the fact that she was from "el barrio." Once she accepted this reality, instead of fleeing her birthplace, she felt compelled to continue to work with the other strong people in the community. Proyecto documents such as *Manela* exhibit a version of Black Power and Black Pride that are not only extensions of the movements happening in places such as the United States, but which are homegrown and Puerto Rican specific. Proyecto members made connections to the Black struggle in other parts of the world (the inside cover of *Manela* actually mentions the pride of people in Harlem who are screaming "Black Power! Poder Negro!"), and Cordero worked with Black Power figures such as Stokely Carmichael, Robert Williams, and James Forman. However, the Proyecto created a version of Black Power in Puerto Rico that was attentive to the effects of colonialism, imperialism, and other class-based forms of racism (and race-based forms of classism), and which also drew from Puerto Rican history and culture for symbols and narratives.

As I conducted research on Cordero and the Proyecto, I witnessed, in person, the themes of understanding, empowerment, and alternative forms of independence. One of the most memorable moments during my trip to Puerto Rico in 2013 was visiting Juana Matos, the setting for *El derecho de vivir*, and one of the first communities where the Proyecto worked. In Juana Matos we met Isabel, or Isabelita, who was involved in the Proyecto during its early years.

Isabelita was born and raised in Juana Matos, and she was in her early teens when she was recruited by Proyecto organizers to participate in political and cultural work in her community. Carmín, another early member of the Proyecto, was also at Isabelita's house, with her husband José, and her sister Cusie. Between the seven of us, we began a rich and lively conversation about Cordero, the Proyecto, and Puerto Rico. We took breaks to snack on Cusie's bacalaitos (codfish fritters) and sample some of Isabelita's pitorro (homemade moonshine rum), much like the snacks that Doña Juana made in the play. Eventually, our conversation slowed so I walked over to Cusie who had gone off to the side to begin crocheting. And then, as suddenly as a Caribbean sun shower, someone began to sing "Federico."

"Federico" was a song produced by members of the Proyecto to protest the mandatory draft of Puerto Ricans during the Vietnam War. Ever since the Jones-Shafroth Act imposed citizenship on Puerto Ricans in 1917 (in the midst of World War I), Puerto Ricans have fought in all major U.S. wars of the 20th century.¹⁴ Given the severity of the Vietnam War, a strong anti-war movement developed on the island, in which hundreds of people began resisting the draft, leading to trials and public demonstrations.¹⁵ Because the Proyecto began in 1967, one of their first campaigns was getting people to think critically about Puerto Rican participation in the war.

¹⁴ In Proyecto documents, citizenship is described as imposed. A pamphlet from the Proyecto's early years says, "Puerto Rican Legislature rejects United States citizenship, demands independence. Independence denied, citizenship imposed." An article by the scholar Héctor Reyes also describes citizenship as being imposed. See Héctor Reyes, "Puerto Rico: The Last Colony," *International Socialist Review*, Issue 03, Winter 1997; Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *Liberación*, 1968. MC 824, folder E.16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁵ According to an informational brochure produced by the Proyecto, "Independentist University (FUPI) and high school (FEPI) students begin nationwide marches, protests and demonstrations against the imposition of the draft in Puerto Rico and for independence. A thousand youths sign a declaration refusing to serve in the United States Army and supporting the people of Vietnam." In another document produced by the Proyecto, a fundraising letter by Dr. Benjamin Spock and Ossie Davis, it says, "For many years, various Puerto Rican organizations have conducted an anti-draft program. People have gone to jail. Pickets and marches have been organized. Recently, a thousand youths signed a pledge not to go if drafted. Dozens of cases of "We won't go" are pending. A test case of nine resisters is now in the courts." Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *Liberación*, 1968. MC 824, folder E.16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

They did this by writing both a song and a play entitled “Federico”, about a young man who is called to fight. There is a transmedia¹⁶ aspect to all this work, since the song is a component of the play, the story told in the song and the play are about the same person, and since “Manela” advertises the “Federico” 45-rpm record on its back cover. Thus, I had read and heard a lot about “Federico” in the primary source materials and in interviews, but at that point, I had been unable to find an original recording of the song.

The group’s singing filled the air, and it shared the story of Federico, who received a letter one day, calling him to fight in Vietnam:

En Puerto Rico Tú vales más
No vayas para Vietnam, Federico

Federico, Federico,
Lo llamaron pa’ Vietnam

Si somos negros y sin un vellón,
Somos carne de cañón, Federico.

(In Puerto Rico you are worth more
Don’t go to Vietnam, Federico

Federico, Federico
They called him to Vietnam

If we are black and without a nickel,
We are cannon fodder, Federico.)

The song advises Federico to stay in Puerto Rico where he is worth more, instead of going to Vietnam where poor black people simply become cannon fodder. The song goes beyond simply addressing the Puerto Rican experience, instead choosing to make a connection between all the poor black people from the United States and its territories dying in the war.

¹⁶ Transmedia storytelling is a way to tell a single story across various mediums. My ideas about transmedia storytelling have been informed by conversations with the filmmaker Yohanna Baez.

I share this anecdote because over the years, many people have asked me about the legacy and impact of Cordero and the Proyecto. It is important to address this question since there has been little to no attention on this work in the existing historiographies that cover the following topics: Puerto Rican history, United States Black Power and Civil Rights history, Latin American and Caribbean History, histories of anti-colonial movements, histories of anti-capitalist movements, histories of the Vietnam War, histories of radical women of color, and histories of a multi-continental left. However, repeatedly, in the interviews I have conducted, I have heard stories of how Cordero and the Proyecto changed people's lives, providing them with a critical lens that they have used to view and live in the world ever since. Many of the people I interviewed remain politically active to this day.

Since this live performance, I have been able to obtain an original copy of the Federico album, which the Proyecto sold to raise money for their organizing. On the cover of the album is a black woman wearing a hoop earring and her hair in an Afro. She has a gaze that looks confident and critical and steadfast, as if she has fearlessly set her eyes on something that she intends to confront in a serious way. Her face hovers amongst utility poles and modest houses, as a silhouetted trumpet player spreads musical notes across the scene. On the back of the album cover is the same woman with the Afro and hoop earrings, except not we see her dancing in a flowing dress amongst musicians, under the words, Taller Afro Ritmo (Afro Rhythm Workshop, the name of the Proyecto's music group). The back of the album says,

¡Aquí estamos! Somos jóvenes, somos negros, somos de la costa y del arrabal. Somos el pueblo y expresamos la realidad que vivimos. Somos del Caribe, con su ritmo y sabor Africano. Y somos de Harlem donde encontramos en la música del Americano negro, la misma fuente Africana que unida a la nuestra da fuerza a nuestra propia realidad.

(Here we are! We are young, we are black, we are of the coast and from the slums/outskirts. We are the people and we express the reality we live. We are from the Caribbean, with its African rhythm and flavor. And we are from Harlem where we find in Black American music, the same African source which, connected to ours, strengthens our own reality).

It is powerful that the group makes an explicit connection to the Black American community in Harlem, using music as the connecting thread to connect this diaspora back to its African roots. This statement also indicates the importance of diaspora to the Puerto Rican experience. Not only do Puerto Ricans and Black Americans connect through music, but they connect because they are living together in communities like Harlem (where Cordero and Julian Mayfield met in the 1950s), and because Black Americans are traveling to Puerto Rico (such as Mayfield did after marrying Cordero). The Taller Afro Ritmo situates itself amongst a tradition of Caribbean music: “Somos la musica brava, la bomba, la plena y la Santeria, somos el guaguanco y el bembé, somos el calypso y el merengue, somos la guaracha y el rumbón, el cha cha cha, el mambo, y el bugalu. Somos la musica del alma que es ritmo africano crecido en nuestra realidad del Caribe y de Harlem” (We are brave music, bomba, plena and Santeria, we are the guaguanco and bembé, we are calypso and merengue, we are guaracha and rumbón, cha cha cha, mambo, and bugalu. We are the music of the soul that is African rhythm grown in our reality in the Caribbean and Harlem). By listing the Afro-rooted sounds that have intersected to create the Taller Afro Ritmo, the group shows that Puerto Rican specificity is actually a form of multiplicity—an ability to use multiple influences as a starting point for, instead of a distraction from, unity.

La Pelea was a paquin, or comic book, which the Proyecto used to educate their members on the global development of capitalism and imperialism. It was beautifully illustrated by David Pagan, the Proyecto’s resident artist. Cordero’s speech and the paquin are different manifestations of the same point of view that guided the work of the Proyecto. Cordero and the Proyecto made a case for Black-Puerto Rican unity that highlighted the shared economic roots of their oppression, as well as their shared racial ancestry. Cordero and the Proyecto claimed their

place in the Black community, while simultaneously embracing a Caribbean, mulato, and Puerto Rican identity as well. By placing the experiences of Afro-North Americans and Puerto Ricans side by side in a way that is not commonly done, Cordero and the Proyecto were able to reveal the alliance that should emerge between the two groups.

La Pelea is a 130 page comic book that covers the development of capitalism, and its transformation into imperialism. The comic was put together during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and it was used as an educational tool for members. The comic follows a group of young people from a barrio in Puerto Rico who are questioning what they have learned in school about the history of the island. All of a sudden, a time machine transports them to sixteenth century Europe, where they witness capitalism arising from the feudal system. The comic goes on to describe capitalist accumulation and industrial development in Europe, with a special emphasis on the role that Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia played in this global economic development.

The last section of the comic, “Los Pueblos Pelean contra los Buitres” (the people fight against the vultures).¹⁷ The last section of the comic takes place during the period from 1858 to 1868, and it follows three young men—Yunque, a Puerto Rican campesino/peasant farmer from the mountains, Bairoa, a Puerto Rican laborer, and John, an escaped slave from Jamaica, who speaks English, French and Spanish, and is the group’s translator—and it proposes a Puerto Rican path towards liberation that is informed by the successes and failures of liberation struggles around the world. This path does not focus solely on the achievement of political independence, or the abolition of slavery.

¹⁷ Buitres, or vultures, was the word Proyecto members used to describe capitalists, owners, and bosses.

On their journeys, the characters come to understand that political independence and the abolition of slavery do not significantly improve the conditions of people like themselves, the black and economically disadvantaged members of society. For example, the characters travel to a slave plantation in the U.S. South, and they realize that although the country has achieved independence, it has not meant that the enslaved people have been liberated. Thinking that the abolition of slavery was the key to true independence, the characters travel to Mexico, which has abolished slavery as well as achieved its independence by this time. However, when the characters meet with indigenous people there, they find that their economic state is still abysmal, and this is because the elite who led the independence struggle did not redistribute the land. The characters make their way to Europe, where they find themselves in the middle of a worker's uprising in France. After discussing with some of the workers, they finally realize that what really needs to be done in Puerto Rico is what these workers are trying to do in Europe—the workers must take control of the land and the factories, and they must eliminate the owners. Although inspired by the worker's uprising in France, the characters are disillusioned by the lack of support they receive from the European workers, especially when they ask if any of the capital that will be redistributed will go towards the Caribbean, which played a crucial role in the development of European capitalism.

Yunque, Bairoa, and John return to their respective islands, and back in Puerto Rico, Yunque and Bairoa meet with Ramon Emeterio Betances, a doctor, descendant of slaves, and independence activist who was a real historical figure who led the Grito de Lares in 1868, the island's first major uprising against the Spanish. Ten years have passed since the characters left the island, and although their travels have left them suspicious of Betances and others leading the independence struggle, Betances encourages the young men to mobilize the masses, if indeed

they are disillusioned by the middle class and self interested individuals leading the movement. Betances also encourages the young men to make one last stop, to Cuba, where they meet José Martí. There they finally find an independence struggle in process that meets all of their needs: Martí explains that they are committed to gaining independence from Spain, abolishing slavery and redistributing the land, and although there are owners amongst those participating in the struggle, the movement will make sure not to let them take over once independence has been achieved. However, Martí warns Yunque and Bairoa that he is now worried about a new threat: the United States, where the developing factories have led to a new type of *buitre*, who has his eyes set on the Caribbean. The young men realize that after so much struggle, they will simply be replacing one *buitre*, or owner, with another.

There are several points of overlap between Cordero's speech and the comic, both in terms of historical facts, and interpretation. Both the comic and the speech bring up the issue of elite individuals with selfish interests leading the independence movement, whether it be in Puerto Rico, the United States, or Mexico. In the paquin, one of the *buitres* makes it quite clear to Yunque: "nos conviene la independencia del punto de vista del dinero"¹⁸ (independence is convenient for us from the point of view of money). In her speech, Cordero explains that in the 18th century, the war of independence in what would become the United States, was "dirigida por los terratenientes, los intelectuales y la naciente burguesia industrial contra el control politico colonial y contra la explotacion economica llevada a cabo por el ya floreciente capitalismo mercantil ingles" (directed by landowners , intellectuals and the nascent industrial bourgeoisie against the colonial political control and economic exploitation carried out by flourishing English mercantile capitalism). In the comic, the characters see the same pattern play out in the United

¹⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "La Pelea," p. 87. MC 824, folder 3.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

States and Mexico. Indeed, the Proyecto was created because of a disenchantment with the methods of the independence movement on the island, primarily represented at the time by the MPI, the Movimiento Pro Independencia, or the Pro Independence Movement. Cordero herself was a distinguished member of the MPI, but she and many other key, young leaders, eventually left the organization to work with the Proyecto, since they wanted to work more directly with the marginalized, black, and economically disadvantaged people of the island.

Another major correlation between the comic and the speech is the emphasis on the Puerto Rican struggle learning from, and situating itself, amongst other contemporary and historical struggles. It is significant that the characters in *La Pelea* are exposed to struggles around the world much in the same way that Cordero was before she returned to Puerto Rico in 1967, to begin the Proyecto. In addition, the characters in *La Pelea* use the scientific method promoted by the Proyecto as well—they traveled from place to place, trying to find out what variable was leading to the continued oppression of the exploited workers. After realizing that independence and abolishing slavery were important, but not the solution, they finally found that the missing link was grabbing the control of resources from the hands of the owners, so that the people would not simply be transferred from one owner to another. This was an important concept within the actual work of the Proyecto, and this is also why both the speech and the comic book consistently make reference to the importance of land ownership: “No se olviden que lo mas importante es la tierra tenemos que conseguir tierra nuestra de donde no nos puedan sacar”¹⁹ (don’t forget that the most important thing is land, we have to obtain our own land where no one can displace us). Cordero quotes Malcolm X making a similar point in her Black Power speech: “Podemos sentarnos al lado del blanco en el toilet, eso no es revolucion, la

¹⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “La Pelea,” p. 94. MC 824, folder 3.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

revolucion esta basada en la tierra, la tierra es la base de la independencia, la base de la libertad, de la justicia, de la igualdad” (we can sit next to a white man in the bathroom, that is not revolution, the revolution is based on land, the land is the basis of independence, the basis of freedom, of justice, of equality). This idea of independence being tied to land was a concept used in other materials developed by the Proyecto, especially in one particular campaign where they worked to prevent the displacement of a squatter community in the late 1960s.

In conclusion, the Cordero and the Proyecto popularized history in order to inform individuals who were not usually mobilized within the Puerto Rican independence movement. The Proyecto rejected the middle class, largely male, and bureaucratic methods of the MPI. Through their use of visual art, music, and drama, they were able to get members to understand Puerto Rico’s importance in the global capitalist system. In addition, a paquin like *La Pelea* would have helped members understand that their own struggle was part of a longer trajectory, and that much could be learned from the struggles that came before. In making the connections between struggles, the Proyecto and Cordero also made a strong case for Puerto Ricans accepting their place within the black community. One character in *La Pelea* says, “Mira Jacinto, En Puerto Rico nadie es blanco todos somos negros con diferente color de piel” (Look Jacinto, in Puerto Rico, no one is white, we are all black with different skin colors). However, in Cordero’s speech, she specifically states, after recounting her entire version of black history, that Puerto Ricans should recognize that they are a “mulato and Caribbean” people. Cordero and the Proyecto made a point to include Puerto Rican history within a larger narrative that places it alongside the history of Blacks in the United States, and in their materials, they consistently celebrated black pride and black beauty. In fact, at one point, Cordero even identified herself as an Afro-American from the Caribbean. However, Cordero and the Proyecto still found it

important to identify with a version of Puerto Rican history that would encompass their complex history of mixing. Although they did not deny their blackness, their historically contextualized racial formation allowed them to encompass a reality that saw Puerto Rican reality as expansive and inclusive, as opposed to limiting. Through their process of situating the Puerto Rican struggle alongside other struggles of the world, their definition of Puerto Ricanness included blackness, but also included a particular Puerto Rican history of colonialism and racism in the Caribbean that is an important part of the grand narrative of the history of global capitalism.

The Proyecto created various artistic narratives that allowed for identification with characters and societal descriptions. These consciousness-strengthening narratives explain the workings of society from a Marxist, class based perspective that is also attentive to Puerto Rican realities of racism, colonialism and imperialism. These narratives focused on marginalized populations and represented them in beautiful, empowering ways, emphasizing their strength. The art produced by the Proyecto also offered alternative possibilities, while highlighting already existing practices of liberation and independence on the island. These narratives, although meant to be creative, were based on real events and situations, and they represent Puerto Rican realities of oppression and resistance that enhance existing historiographies of 1960s liberation movements both on the island and outside of the island, especially since these are stories told from the point of view of poor, geographically and politically marginalized individuals of color. Thus, the Proyecto's communal production techniques demonstrate that popular education is an effective means of both mobilization and historical documentation.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen that the Proyecto's perspective on revolution had to do with people finding ways to be economically independent, proud and happy of the way they looked, willing to organize within their own community, and unafraid to confront people

who would exploit them. The Proyecto developed materials that were specific to the realities of simultaneously living in Puerto Rico, Latin America, the Third World, and, in a way, in the United States, during the Cold War.

Chapter Five

The Long Resistance: Activism and its Afterlives

Personal and political tales weave through the passports that Cordero used during the last three decades of her life. The United States passports that Cordero used from 1961 to 1990 facilitated her activism around the world, but they were also a means for the state to track her movement. However, like many other moments in her life, Cordero repurposed a tool of the oppressor on behalf of the Puerto Rican liberation struggle.

This chapter will cover the last two decades of Cordero's life, using her passports as a conceptual framework for thinking about the continuity and also the maturity of her activism. The standardized headshots in Cordero's passports, when analyzed side by side, depict an aging woman, dressed and looking into the camera in ways that both reflect a particular stage in her life, and in the world. Although full of several personal details related to Cordero's life and body, the passports also include information which tell a story of the geopolitical changes that took place during the final few decades of the Cold War. In this way, her passports help us to think about the continuity and change that manifested in the last decades of Cordero's life, a period during which her political voice becomes most clear and noticeable in the archive.

During the last decades of her life, Cordero was involved in a variety of initiatives in Puerto Rico that were not solely related to the Proyecto. She wrote on public health issues, analyzing the privatization of medical care in Puerto Rico, and the consequences this had on the population. Cordero published in public venues, such as the newspaper article in which she wrote a social biography centered on her mother and the former Puerto Rican "first lady," Inés María Mendoza Muñoz. The article, published after Mendoza Muñoz passed away, situated the

political perspectives and actions of two women born during the beginning of the United States occupation within a broader Puerto Rican context that revealed important points about feminism and radicalism on the island. In another newspaper article, Cordero tackled the hypocrisy of certain sectors of Puerto Rican society which embraced folkloric aspects of Black Puerto Rican culture for strategic interests, but then denied their black ancestry. And off the page, Cordero continued to extend her reach, building with mainstream and respectable leaders within Puerto Rican society, such as when she worked as one of the main organizers of a broad-based committee that sought to free Haitians who were being detained at a former military base in Puerto Rico in the early 1980s.

This work on the island, during which Cordero publicly shared thoroughly articulated political views, were accompanied by international work in new locations. Beginning in the mid-1980s, Cordero worked with Proyecto members—some of whom were new to the group, and some of whom had become family—in a new collective called the Manuel Santos Brigade. The Manuel Santos Brigade organized six solidarity trips to Nicaragua between 1986 and 1990. This work is an important and understudied example of intra-Latin American solidarity in the 1980s.

Although Cordero remained active as a writer, organizer, and mentor until she passed away in 1992, she was quite sick during the last decade of her life. Her childhood asthma, exacerbated by environmental conditions, eventually developed into COPD. She became physically limited in a way that contrasted sharply with her time as a ballerina, a hands-on physician, and a world traveler. During her final years, she spent long hours in an air-conditioned room in the home she shared with Samuel Aviles in Vega Baja. Still, she managed to muster the energy to travel to New York City several times (to help a Proyecto member obtain adequate

medical care, to visit old friends such as John Henrik Clarke and Howard Stanton, and to join peace marches) and to Nicaragua in 1990 following the FSLN's election loss.

Cordero's approach to activism was not only circumscribed by her breathing difficulties, but by the imperial state. The severe and constant repression faced by the Proyecto in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s led the group to work on a more clandestine level. In her later writings, which included an eighty-page Proyecto curriculum, Cordero analyzed the origins and results of various revolutionary movements. Cordero's creation and compilation of political education materials, in addition to her public writing and coalition-building, were condensations of the wisdom she developed over a lifetime of activism.

Ultimately, Cordero's activism took various forms throughout her life, but the effects of her activism still exist and have manifested in a variety of ways. Cordero writings offer wisdom for the present, and the connections she facilitated shaped the lives of people who are still alive. This chapter explores how Cordero's resistance and its afterlives continue well beyond the finite dates and standardized photos included in passports or police files.

Puerto Rico, U.S.A.: Oppression and Opportunities in Cordero's Passports

The photo in Cordero's passport which was issued on September 13, 1961 shows her body at an angle, and her face looking at the camera.¹ Her short and loose curls neatly frame her face and her smile. If this photo was taken around the time that the passport was issued, then Cordero would have been thirty years old and about seven months pregnant with her second child, Emiliano. This was the passport which Cordero used to travel to Accra, Ghana in November, 1961. If taken around the time this passport was issued, Cordero seems quite calm,

¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Passports. MC 824, 2.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

hopeful, and ready, considering that she was about to move to Ghana, pregnant, with her husband and four year old, in order to work at a recently founded medical research institute in a country that had gained independence from Britain just four years before.

The word “Passport,” in gold, capital letters adorns the front of Cordero’s passport booklet. There is an eagle in the center, with United States of America written underneath. On the page opposite her photo, is information about Cordero’s physical characteristics and birth. Her birthday is listed as July 4, 1931, and her birthplace as Puerto Rico, U.S.A. She is five feet, four inches, and her hair and eyes are listed as brown. There are three X’s in the spaces that ask for the name of a wife, and the name of minors. There was no place to put the name of a husband, and her first son, Rafael, was not listed. On the third page it reads, “The Secretary of State of the United States of America hereby requests all whom it may concern to permit the citizen(s) of the United States named herein to pass without delay or hindrance and in case of need to give said citizen(s) all lawful aid and protection.” For Cordero, as a Puerto Rican, her passport was an important tool that allowed her to become a “global race woman.”²

Another page of the passport reads, “The passport is not valid for travel to or in communist controlled portions of China, Korea, Viet-nam, or to or in Albania, Cuba.” Out of all of the countries listed, Cuba is the only country that was rubber-stamped into the passport, after everything else written in the passport was already printed. This passport was issued in 1961, just two years after the Cuban revolution of 1959, and it is interesting to see the evolving sense of what countries the United States viewed as a threat. When Cordero traveled to Cuba in January 1966, she would have been aware that she was breaking the law and it is possible that she traveled to the island via Spain or France.

² See the work of Imaobong Umoren.

Cordero's next passport was issued in 1966 and documents her return to the United States from Ghana and Spain, on August 31, 1966.³ This time Cuba is printed, and not just stamped, as one of the countries that passport holders are prohibited from entering. Cordero obtained her 1973 passport at the Governor's office in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and it only lists Cuba, North Korea, North Viet-nam as prohibited countries. The list of communist countries evolved, but Puerto Rico's colonial condition remained unchanged. Another difference is that her name in her 1973 passport is Ana Livia Mayfield, a name also found in her final passport, issued in 1990. Rafael explained that his mother's last name was Mayfield in her last two passports because of surveillance concerns. Cordero's entries into and exits from Puerto Rico were indeed scrutinized in her police files.

Cordero's 1973 passport is also notable because there were no entry and exit stamps, unlike the many stamps in her previous passports.⁴ After Cordero returned to Puerto Rico in 1967, she decided to dedicate herself to struggles on the island, as well as personal issues. The Proyecto dedicated itself to the work during its clandestine phase. Cordero worked on various writing projects, including a curriculum and the Cerro Maravilla investigation. She focused on raising her children and taking care of the children of others. In the 1970s and 1980s, she lost her father, mother, and former partner, Julian Mayfield. And beginning in the early 1980s, Cordero began to get very sick.

Cordero's breathing problems had multiple possible roots. First of all, Cordero had suffered from asthma from a young age. In addition, during the period of her adulthood, from the

³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Passports. MC 824, 2.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Passports. MC 824, 2.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

1940s to the 1970s, she would have been around a lot of people who would have been smoking, and so she would have constantly been around second-hand smoke. Rafael assured me that his mother herself did not smoke. In addition, he also points to the fact that Cordero was probably affected by the environmental pollution of Puerto Rico itself. She was already susceptible because of her asthma, and living near factories in poor communities could have affected her. Cordero spent much of her time during her final years in an air-conditioned room in her house in Vega Baja.

Despite all of this, Cordero continued to work and write. Thus, the 1980s represent the period when we can hear Cordero's voice in the archive most clearly. Not only do we have pieces that she wrote, such as an op-ed on racial negation in Puerto Rico, and an article where she compares her own mother to Inés María Mendoza de Muñoz, and which offers one of her clearest articulations of her feminism, but we also have writing she did on behalf of a solidarity committee that was working to free Haitians that were detained in a former military base in Puerto Rico. She spent time working on her typical analyses of society, using her Marxist method that was also influenced by her scientific and logical mind. It is also possible to hear her voice in more personal tones during this period: in letters that she wrote to her son Rafael while he was working in Nicaragua, and in the letters that she wrote to her friends in the United States, encouraging them to keep the passion for struggle alive even as they lived working-class lives as migrants. Cordero dedicated herself to taking care of children whose parents migrated to the United States. And she continued to help people who needed medical attention. Several Proyecto members shared a similar story, which was that trips to the beach would be indefinitely postponed because Cordero would stop if she saw a car accident, and would help anyone who was hurt, accompanying them all the way to the hospital.

Haitian Solidarity, Puerto Rican Sovereignty

One of the shifts during Cordero's last decade of life is that she began to work with Puerto Rican based coalitions again, even after some of the tensions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In fact, she worked alongside some of the most respectable figures in Puerto Rico, such as the scholar Ricardo Alegria, the theater director Victoria Espinosa, Roberto Clemente's widow, Vera Clemente, and Luis Muñoz Marín's widow, Inés María Mendoza de Muñoz. Cordero's collaboration with these figures does not only speak to Cordero's political development, it also indicates the increasing outspokenness of mainstream figures on the island. One of the reasons that independentismo became more respectable in the 1980s is thanks to Cordero's investigation of the 1978 Cerro Maravilla killings. Cordero's findings were used in Puerto Rican Senate hearings on Puerto Rican police corruption.⁵ As a result, the Puerto Rican police intelligence division was dismantled, reducing the amount of repression faced by individuals on the island with points of view that could be interpreted as anti-colonial.

The work Cordero did with the Haitian refugee solidarity committee is also a story of the beginnings of what is now a booming industry of detaining and deporting migrants from the United States in ways that violate human rights and provoke outrage from the general public. In the organizing documents related to this campaign, activists reveal absolute horror to detention practices that are now routine.⁶

As part of her activism with the Puerto Rican-Haitian solidarity committee, Cordero wrote an essay entitled, "The Haitian Dilemma."⁷ It is unclear when and where this essay was

⁵ Finding aid for Ana Livia Cordero papers, accessible at <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~sch01507>

⁶ For more on the rise of the contemporary immigrant detention and deportation system in the United States, see Mark Dow, *American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; "The Haitian Dilemma." MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

published, if at all. In the essay, she explained the drastic change in immigration policy which had led to Haitians being detained in Puerto Rico in the first place. She noted that “The Carter administration had given the Cuban and Haitian visa-less refugees arriving before October 10, 1980, permission to remain temporarily in the United States...at that cut-off point, 28,000 Haitian refugees were to be allowed to remain in the United States, but since that time, approximately 1,500 more have arrived every month in Florida.”⁸ Cordero was narrating a change in refugee policy that had to do with the transition between the Carter and Reagan administrations following the November 1980 presidential election. Cordero explained that “the Reagan administration recently issued a presidential decree ordering the United States Coast Guard to patrol the straight between Haiti and the Bahamas, stop by force if necessary all vessels that could be carrying visa-less Haitians in route to Miami, and return them to Haiti.”⁹ That is, Reagan had decided that no more Haitians would be allowed to remain and seek refuge in the United States, but Cordero also noted that the administration had “found the existing burocratic [sic] mechanisms for expelling them too slow and combersome [sic].”¹⁰ Thus, what Cordero described (in English that is impressive and lucid despite some understandable typos for a non-native English speaker) is an early example of a presidential administration dealing with a massive amount of refugees from Latin America and the Caribbean, a problem that has continued to increase into the twentieth century.

⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

However, Cordero was careful to note the racial and class undertones to the treatment of Haitians. She wrote, “this decision, taken in order to eliminate the problem created by thousands of black, poor and illiterate immigrants arriving in a racist society, may prove to be a costly mistake for the United States Government.”¹¹ In the rest of her essay, Cordero analyzed a government proposal from the United States Department of Justice for dealing with the expulsion of Haitians. This issue paper from the Department of Justice proposed “removing legal guarantees,” detaining refugees pending their deportation, and “stopping (interdicting) the refugees on the high seas.”¹² However, Cordero also explained that Department of Justice was struggling with the question of whether the coast guard even had the authority to exercise such power. They also acknowledged that they may need to use “deadly force” in order to carry out their duty, and that this “could adversely affect the precarious political situation in Haiti.”¹³ The DOJ issue paper which Cordero cited from explained, “if political unrest were to develop, it would be difficult to sustain a program of repatriation in view of treaty obligations towards refugees,”¹⁴ and they went on to muse that “there could be unfavorable reactions in other black Caribbean and African nations to the extent that they believed that the enforcement policy was racially motivated.”¹⁵

¹¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

This moment was representative of the beginnings of an immigration enforcement force that now operates in full swing, and Cordero described a system of detention still in its early phases. She explained that “the United States Government is now faced with a rapidly increasing detention camp population which has created additional problems. The states involved most emphatically do not want the detention camps, the white population has protested, and in Florida the Ku Klux Klan has even threatened violence against the refugees.”¹⁶ This became a question of the actual space of the detention camp, the emerging space of the detention camp, and how it was becoming a thing that society had to reckon with. Another important point which was just the beginning of more to come, was the exorbitant costs of this detention. Cordero cites the DOJ issue paper, which explains that “stopping 40% of migrants would cost 180 million a year...stopping 85% would cost 425 million a year....15 million a year if existing resources used, but would affect other Coast Guard activities. However, starting a detention center is 10 million, and housing 6000 refugees is 40 million a year.”¹⁷ Given all of this, Cordero astutely wrote, “considering the potentially very serious consequences for United States foreign policy of this action and the very high financial costs one is forced to ask why such risks are being taken in order to stop a migration which only represents “probably less than 2% of total illegal migration into the United States.”¹⁸

Cordero, in her usual way, brought the issue back to how it affected Puerto Rico:

Here in Puerto Rico, where 800 refugees are being imprisoned at Fort Allen, the United States Government is faced with growing opposition to its actions against ‘our Caribbean brothers’. Puerto Ricans representing different sectors of society have organized to demand their immediate

¹⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

release, and to oppose their deportation. They have also offered to sponsor those who wish to remain in Puerto Rico.¹⁹

She referenced the respectability of the people also on the committee, explaining that the people on this committee represented different sectors of society, including the “the widow of Luis Muñoz Marín, who called the Fort Allen Detention Center ‘an intolerable concentration camp’ and has accused the United States of racism.”²⁰ The perspective of this Puerto Rican committee says something very important also about the ways that Puerto Ricans were fighting for more recognition of their sovereignty and self-determination:

The resulting turmoil has once again raised the demand for Puerto Rican control over immigration [sic] into its national territory. United States support for the Duvalier dictatorship has also come under attack, and the United Nations is considering assigning an observer to look into the violations of human rights at Fort Allen.²¹

For this committee, one of the major rights denied Puerto Rico under United States rule was the right to control who entered the island. In addition, Puerto Rico was claiming its role as a place that could not only critique the Duvalier regime, but also take their grievances to an international body such as the United Nations, in raising awareness and fighting for issues that are taking place on their land.

The points that Cordero made in her “Haitian Dilemma” essay were reiterated more broadly in the organizing materials produced by the committee, which called itself *Ciudadanos unidos en apoyo al pueblo Haitiano* (Citizens united in support of the Haitian people). In a handout produced by the committee, they referred to Haitians as “trabajadores and campesinos”

¹⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “The Haitian Dilemma.” MC 824, 9.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

(workers and peasants/country people), and explained that the United States did not want them because they were “pobres y negros” (poor and black).²² The handout also made reference to the Duvalier regime, explaining how those in power owned everything and controlled the people. They offer a practical solution, saying there is a community in Miami, and also assuring that as Puerto Ricans, they are willing to make room to accept the refugees.

It is significant to note that Haitians were being held in Fort Allen, which is a former United States army base in Puerto Rico converted into a detention camp.²³ This is representative of a broader, global military industrial incarceration complex. This was an earlier instance of the convergence of all of these forces, and the camp consisted of “Casetas de lona,” canvas tents where people lived. Outraged by the conditions at the camp, the Puerto Rican committee called Fort Allen “un campo de concentración en suelo puertorriqueño” (a concentration camp on Puerto Rican soil). They continue, “Es una vergüenza el que se use el suelo puertorriqueño para encarcelar a estos hermanos antillanos en un campo de concentración” (It’s an embarrassment that Puerto Rican soil is being used to incarcerate these Antillean brothers in a concentration camp). The committee expressed an Antillean sentiment here, and it is significant because it was an example of a Hispanophone Caribbean country accepting Haiti in a region with linguistic and social divisions that existed despite geographic, cultural and economic similarities.

The handout listed the demands that were made by the Haitian solidarity committee, which included that the refugees be released before Christmas, that they be allowed to live with the Haitian community in Miami, and that they not be returned to a place where their lives would

²² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Flyer. MC 824, 9.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²³ One document explained that in August 1981, the United States moved 800 Haitians from Miami to Puerto Rico, and another explained that this center was Krome, which is still a detention camp in use today. Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

be in danger. One of the most powerful points in the letter is when the committee explained that the Haitians be allowed to integrate in Puerto Rico. They wrote, “estamos dispuestos a recibir a aquellos refugiados Haitianos que quieran quedarse en Puerto Rico y compartir con ellos lo poco que tenemos. Aunque en Puerto Rico las cosas están malas, estamos menos mal que ellos y no podemos dejar que los devuelvan a Haiti donde les puede esperar la muerte”²⁴ (We are willing to receive them here the Haitian refugees who want to stay in Puerto Rico, and to share with them the little that we have. Even though things are bad in Puerto Rico, we are less worse off than them and we can’t let them be returned to Haiti where death might be waiting for them). It is powerful that the committee offered to help others when they themselves were dealing with their own economic and social issues. This is representative of not just compassion and capaciousness, but also of a practical solidarity that sometimes goes unnoticed in the region. In places like the Caribbean and Latin America, which exist in the shadows of United States imperialism, this form of practical solidarity has allowed communities to survive despite exploitation and limited resources.

In this handout, committee members exercised their authority and sovereignty as Puerto Ricans. They wrote,

Creemos que solo los puertorriqueños debemos tener el derecho a decidir que extranjeros entran a nuestro país. Si hubiéramos tenido este derecho no estarán estos hermanos antillanos presos en Fuerte Allen.²⁵

(We think that only Puerto Ricans should have the right to decide what foreigners enter into our country. If we would have had that right, our Antillean brothers and sisters would not be incarcerated in Fort Allen).

²⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Committee members were reclaiming and demanding a right that was taken away from them following United States occupation, which is the right to determine who enters the country. However, in this moment, members of the solidarity committee were also exercising their power as United States citizens, and at the time, there was no such thing as a Puerto Rican citizen. Indeed, their committee was called, Citizens in support of the Haitian people. At the same time that they wanted to be recognized as Puerto Ricans who had control over their land, they also wanted to be taken seriously as United States citizens attempting to intervene in United States immigration policy.

In addition to the powerful rhetoric produced by the Haitian solidarity committee, there were other accompanying actions that took place in support of the Haitians imprisoned at Fort Allen. On December 12, 1981, the committee organized a march from Guayama (in the southern part of the island) to Juana Diaz, where Fort Allen was located (also in the southern part of the island, but about ... miles west of Guayama).²⁶ There would also be people joining the caravan by car from San Juan. The plan was to come together in Juana Diaz, where there would be music followed by ecumenical services. In press releases from the days before the event, the committee explained all the different groups participating, and there was a quotation from Victoria Espinosa, who explained that there was no one political strain represented in this caravan.²⁷ Other important mentioned as participating in the caravan included, Ines Maria Mendoza Muñoz,

²⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Ferre, and Ricardo Alegria.²⁸ In a document that announced the event, the committee members explained that this was a united effort on the part of Puerto Ricans from different walks of life.²⁹

la unión del pueblo de Puerto Rico en este acto de compasión, de auténtico cristianismo y de protesta...se hace libre de banderías político-partidistas y de sectarismo religioso o ideológico...Nuestro pueblo marchara unido, como puertorriqueños, como sinceros defensores de la libertad y la justicia.

(the unity of the Puerto Rican people in this act of compassion, of authentic Christianity, and of protest...is done free of political or party banners or of religious sect or ideology...Our community marches united, as Puerto Ricans, as sincere defenders of liberty and justice).

Again, there is a reiteration of Puerto Rican identity in this work. The idea was that when it came to the issue of detained Haitians, a shared Puerto Rican identity was a way to unite a community, a community that again fought because of the violation of Puerto Rican self-determination over the use of their land. They explained this point further when they wrote, “no solo condenamos la injusta acción que se ha tomado contra nuestros hermanos sino también el que se haga uso de nuestro suelo para establecer, sin nuestro consentimiento y en contra de nuestra tradicional hospitalidad, un nefasto e inhumano campo de concentración” (we do not only condemn the unjust action that is being taken against our brothers and sisters but also that our land is being used to establish, without our consent and against our traditional hospitality, a nefast and inhumane concentration camp). Again, not only were they staking a claim over their land, but they were also condemning the United States for going against their traditional culture of hospitality. In a transnational turn for this effort, a solidarity march was being organized in D.C. as well.

²⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

In a transcript produced after the caravan to Juana Diaz, there was the rhetoric of Haiti being black and the poorest nation in the Americas.³⁰ However, in a more nuanced turn, there was also a discussion of the horrors of the Duvalier regime and the United States support for this regime. This transcript also contained quotations from a letter from nineteen Haitians held at the camp. They described be sprayed while naked, the extreme heat, the mosquitos, and the constant force they faced, being told to sign up to go back to Haiti. They explained, “porque nos tratan así? Sera porque somos negros? ...Cuando vendrá nuestra liberación?” (why do they treat us like this? Is it because we are black?...when will our liberation come?). This document, which notes the participation of Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, and Inés María Mendoza Muñoz in the committee, went further on their push for sovereignty: “los puertorriqueños no están de acuerdo con la política de Estados Unidos hacia los refugiados Haitianos. Han demandado el control sobre la inmigración a su país” (Puerto Ricans are not in agreement with the policy of the United States towards the Haitian refugees. They have demanded control over immigration to their country). These lines asserted that this committee believed that Puerto Rico was their country, and that they wanted control over the matters that any other country would have control over.

In the course of organizing for this committee, there are examples of some of the mundane tasks associated with organizing. For example, one document is a hand drawn map, in what appears to be Cordero’s handwriting, that details all the times and locations of the stops.³¹

In a letter that Cordero wrote to two people named Jean Claude and Sylvia, she explained the

³⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

logistics of sending out press releases, and the need to send out more than one to each contact. She included a list of different media outlets in print and radio. She mentioned a meeting on Wednesday and an upcoming meeting with Inés Mendoza.³² There is even a flyer draft in her handwriting.³³

On March 23, 1982, a press conference on this issue was organized in New York City. There is a sign in sheet of the press that attended, but there is also a document with a list of all the press, the names of the people they called with checkmarks and it looks like it could have been written in Rafael's handwriting, indicating another turn that marked the end of Cordero's life, which was the increased participation of her son in the activism.³⁴ For this press conference, the press release read, "The delegation will ask to include these demands in its report on Puerto Rico's colonial condition to be debated this year by the General Assembly." They planned to take this issue to the United Nation decolonization committee.³⁵ They also mention Reagan talking to Puerto Rican governor about extending the detention another year, mention all the groups involved, how the United Nations has supported other Puerto Rican causes, like Vieques, and they also make clear that the Puerto Rican legislature has approved resolutions around this issue.³⁶ Indeed, on January 11, 1982, the Puerto Rican Senate had approved a resolution, and so had the Puerto Rican House of Representatives, in addition to getting letters from the bishop of

³² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Ponce, and the Puerto Rican bar association.³⁷ There was an article from a PIP newspaper on a Latin American human rights association doing an investigation in January, 1982 and a statement from the Organization of American States in October, 1981.³⁸ Also, a long analysis from Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights.³⁹

There is additional evidence that a broad-based coalition of people supported this solidarity effort. On July 25, 1981, Inés Mendoza published an article in the newspaper *El Nuevo Dia*. She explained Haitian history, and interestingly wrote that instead of feeling bad for Haitians, people should respect them. She ended, “seríamos cómplices de un crimen de esa humanidad...no nos obliguen a ser carceleros” (we would be accomplices in this crime against humanity...do not force us to be incarcerators).⁴⁰ Even Cordero’s mother, Vivi Garcés, wrote a letter to the editor in chief of the *San Juan Star* about the issue on September 20, 1981.⁴¹ In perfect English, she explained that she was angry that the publication was not writing about the Haitian issue. She pointed out that she hoped this didn’t have to do with the fact that Reagan’s people met with the newspaper’s people. She ended the letter by saying, “as a university professor, I taught many years a class, ‘The School and the Press in the Contemporary World’...journalistic objectivity did not exist because it will always reflect the opinion of its owners.” The historian Ricardo Alegría wrote a piece called, “The Caribbean Migration,” that

³⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; Doña Vivi letter to *San Juan Star*. MC 824, 1.2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

explained migration within the Caribbean and was published in *El Nuevo Día* on August 8, 1981.⁴² The New York Times also covered the story on March 5, 1982 and March 10, 1982.⁴³

“Afro-Americans from the Caribbean”

One of the things that Cordero continued to do towards the end of her life was to ensure that Puerto Ricans were included in conversations about the African diaspora. In a letter dated October 14, 1983, Cordero alerted long-time activist Vicki Garvin that, “as usual, I have a controversial point to raise.”⁴⁴ The letter registers as simultaneously cordial, defiant, and weary. Cordero objected to the fact that Garvin, one of the organizers for a “Ghana Reunion” in Washington D.C. that had taken place two months before, had “left out all of us Afro-Americans from the Caribbean who were in Ghana.”⁴⁵ The purpose of the reunion, as articulated by those who participated in the meeting, was “to gather together as many as possible of the African-Americans who lived in or visited Ghana between Independence and the coup of 1966 which toppled the government of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.”⁴⁶ Nkrumah welcomed those of African descent to Ghana during the electric period of hope following the country’s 1957 independence.

⁴² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴⁴ For more on Vicki Garvin, see Dayo Gore’s article, “From Communist Politics to Black Power: The Visionary Politics and Transnational Solidarities of Victoria “Vicki” Ama Garvin,” in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, Dayo Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Ghana Reunion.” MC 824, 2.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Ghana Reunion.” MC 824, 2.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Among those who attended the reunion in DC many years later were Maya Angelou, Max and Jean Bond, Nell Irvin Painter, and Julian Mayfield (who informed Cordero of the event).

Cordero did not hesitate to make it clear that she and others from the Caribbean should have been included. In her letter to Garvin, she wrote:

I would like to ask for a reconsideration and would like to remind those of us who were there that we argued this out at one of the meetings we had with Malcolm to organize the OAAU...It was clear that Malcolm had grown from U.S. Black Nationalism to a Pan-Africanist concept of the struggle. Since you have undertaken to building a memorial in Ghana to Dr. Du Bois I will argue that it is only fitting as a memorial to the father of Pan-Africanism that the group be broadened to include us Afro-Americans from the Caribbean who worked and struggled in Ghana.⁴⁷

There were indeed a substantial number of Afro-Americans from the Caribbean who lived in and visited Ghana post-1957. This group included George Padmore, C.L.R. James, Norman Manley, George Lamming, Frantz Fanon, W. Arthur Lewis, Neville Dawes, Eric Williams, and Cordero herself. From this list, it is evident that Cordero stood out even more as a Caribbean expatriate in Ghana, given that she was a woman, and that she was from a Spanish-speaking country.

By insisting on the phrase “Afro-Americans from the Caribbean,” Cordero seemed to be responding directly to the reunion’s purpose of bringing together African-Americans, but she pushed at the boundaries of this racial category, using precise phrasing that challenged a United States-based African-American experience. Cordero’s critical intervention in the case of the Ghana reunion was one of many she made from the 1940s to the 1990s, during a lifetime in which her analysis was sharpened by sudden and frequent shifts between feelings of exclusion and inclusion. Cordero’s vacillation between belonging and not belonging was heightened by some of the contradictions that existed between who she was, what she stood for, and what she did. Cordero was a white-skinned Puerto Rican who affirmed the role of Puerto Ricans in a

⁴⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “Ghana Reunion.” MC 824, 2.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

global black struggle; she was a woman in a patriarchal world who studied medicine at Columbia University and worked as a doctor, researcher, and professor in the United States, Puerto Rico and Ghana; and despite her elite background and education, she dedicated the last twenty-five years of her life to living and organizing with some of Puerto Rico's most marginalized and impoverished communities.

Political and Historical Perspectives on Healthcare in Puerto Rico

Throughout her life, Cordero made connections between health and politics. In fact, her political work had a scientific quality to it, and in her medical and public health work, she highlighted the underlying political implications within this field. In the 1980s, Cordero wrote a twenty-page piece on the privatization of the health industry in Puerto Rico entitled, “La verdad sobre los medicos privados y los servicios de salud en P.R.: Los dioses con pies de barro” (The Truth about Private Doctors and Health Services in Puerto Rico: Gods with Feet of Clay). The essay is an example of applied political analysis that also provides a window into what Cordero thought about the goals and problems within the medical education and provision industry.⁴⁸ The article sought to explain how it came to be that 70% of the population in Puerto Rico obtained health care in private facilities when at a prior point, 70% of the population obtained health care from public facilities.⁴⁹ In order to answer this question, Cordero provided an astute political analysis in which she described the way that post-Depression reforms provided government-sponsored health care that led to a pacification of the population, but how this system eventually

⁴⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “La verdad sobre los medicos privados y los servicios de salud en P.R.: Los dioses con pies de barro.” MC 824, 2.20. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴⁹ After 1984, because mentions 1984 on pp. 17, maybe 1987 because in Nicaragua letter to Rafael she mentions it.

transitioned into a privatized health industry focused on maximizing profits. She explained that the turn towards curative as opposed to preventative medicine was leading to elaborate procedures that were not only costlier, but many times unnecessary, given that many health issues in the society could be resolved with much cheaper preventative care. Cordero also explained the historical roots to the class dimensions of health care, and she pointed out that it was the poor and the disenfranchised who were commonly subjected to nonessential and potentially dangerous procedures. Cordero's essay demonstrated how capitalism created health inequalities, and she made sure to show how these issues played out on the ground in Puerto Rico.

As in other times in her life, she applied her analysis of global political economy to the Puerto Rican case, or rather, revealed Puerto Rico's role and experience in this global political economy. Cordero was attuned to the particular ways that oppressions intersected in Puerto Rico, due to its history, and this piece is a powerful example of her showing the ways that Puerto Rico's oppression as a both a domestic and international space, in relation to the United States, led to negative health outcomes for the people on the island. As one the United States' nearest and oldest colonies, there is some ease and repetition to the oppression seen on the island. In her essay, Cordero demonstrated the way that Puerto Rico was legally and politically subject to all the oppressions that affected people in the United States, but also subject to all of the realities and legacies associated with being a part of the Caribbean, Latin America, and the rest of the Third World. Cordero also made connections between the substandard health conditions of those in Puerto Rico and people in other parts of the world, which continued to deteriorate despite developments in technology and the rising incomes of those working as doctors. Interestingly, Cordero ended her article by emphasizing the importance of mental health. Cordero's attention to

the mental and emotional trauma caused by substandard living conditions is representative of her holistic outlook when it came to liberation.

As an example of the way that Cordero explained the way that mental oppression was one of the determining factors in people's health outcomes, Cordero described the mental brainwashing that made some patients bow down to a doctor's authority. Of course, Cordero was also careful to point out the very material effects of the mental oppression that people faced. She wrote,

En Puerto Rico la medicina tiene un sitio aparte como si fuera una religión, que está más allá del entendimiento de los mortales y sus Dioses son los médicos que tienen en sus manos la decisión sobre la vida o la muerte de sus pacientes. Esta actitud, estimulada por los médicos, les da un poder extraordinario en nuestra sociedad y los inmuniza contra las críticas y el control social.

(In Puerto Rico, medicine is set apart as if it was a religion, that it is beyond the understanding of mortals and the religion's Gods are doctors who have in their hands the decision over the life and death of their patients. This attitude, stimulated by the doctors, gives them an extraordinary power in our society and immunizes them against criticism and social control).

Cordero was explaining how doctors in Puerto Rico were glorified as Gods, and how the doctors themselves promoted this attitude in order to protect themselves from critique. Such a lack of accountability is a typical pattern found within colonial situations.⁵⁰

One of the notable things about this essay is the way we see Cordero using the analytic process taught within the Proyecto to understand the privatization of the healthcare industry. By having such a clear example of the method of analysis used in unauthored Proyecto documents, we not only see Proyecto method in action, but we also are able to get a sense of Cordero's influence in the development of that method, given the resonance between the documents, and

⁵⁰ However, her description of the way doctors are regarded in Puerto Rico, is very different from the way that Fanon describes relations between doctors and patients. In the chapter, "Medicine and Colonialism," in the book, *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon describes a situation where colonial subjects are scared of their doctors, writing, "When the colonized escapes the doctor, and the integrity of his body is preserved, he considers himself the victor by a handsome margin" (127-128). He discusses "The Algerian's refusal to be hospitalized" (124) and explained that "the sudden deaths of Algerians in hospitals" is "interpreted as the effects of a murderous and deliberate decision" (123).

the fluent and expert way in which she applies the method. Thus, this document represents an important condensation of her voice.

Es necesario aprovechar este conflicto para entender la magnitud del problema y sus causas. Este análisis ofrecerá los instrumentos para poder entender la verdadera crisis que viven los Servicios de Salud en Puerto Rico.

(It is necessary to take advantage of this conflict in order to understand the magnitude of the problem and its causes. This analysis will offer the instruments in order to understand the true crisis that Health Services are experiencing in Puerto Rico).

What makes this identifiable as the method used within the Proyecto is the use of the word “conflicto,” or conflict. Within the Proyecto, one of the first steps in addressing any problem was to first understand a problem, primarily its causes. This analysis would allow people to take the necessary steps to address a problem. This is exactly what Cordero is prescribing in this article, when she explained that it was important to actually take advantage of the problems in the health system in Puerto Rico, because it would be an opportunity to dig deeper and understand the capitalist roots of the health crisis in Puerto Rico.

Cordero made the point that the number of doctors did not need to be high or increased, and that the focus needed to be reoriented towards preventative health. She acknowledged that there have been public health changes that have helped people live longer in Puerto Rico: clean water, outhouses, nutrition, school food, milk stations, fumigation for malaria, tuberculosis screening, vaccination. She also made reference to one of the programs she herself promoted and wrote about and implemented in Puerto Rico and Ghana:

Adicionalmente, el adiestramiento y supervisión de las comadronas tradicionales y de las enfermeras de salud pública y centros de salud para supervisar el embarazo y mejorar la atención en los partos redujo dramáticamente las muertes de las madres y los recién nacidos en los partos.

(Additionally, the training and supervision of the traditional midwives and of the public health nurses and health centers to supervise pregnancy and improve the attention during labor reduced dramatically the deaths of the mothers and newborns during labor).

This is an example of the long resistance. She acknowledged that clinical and curative medicine helped in cases where people are already sick. However, she also pointed out that non-medical personnel could help in cases where it was just a simple and cheap technique that needed to be performed. In fact, she dedicated this essay to other doctors in her milieu who were involved in developing these methods in Puerto Rico, such as Guillermo Arbona, Ernesto Marchand, Amalia Martínez Pico.

Cordero explained that the ‘sophisticated and expensive’ techniques were just a small part of the measures that actually help a community. She identified the main health problems in Puerto Rico to be “la salud mental y social que incluye entre otros el problema del alcohol, las drogas, los accidentes de tránsito, los homicidios y la criminalidad para los que hay que tomar medidas preventivas de primer nivel” (mental and social health that includes problems with alcohol, drugs, transit accidents, homicides, and criminality for which preventative measures at the first level need to be taken). These problems were followed by heart, lung, and cancer, which she acknowledged “son en gran medida causadas por la contaminación del ambiente, y por malos hábitos de alimentación y de vida” (are in large part caused by the contamination of the environment and by bad nutrition and life habits). She concluded that doctors had a limited role to play, necessary but not the most essential aspect of protecting the health of a community and she instead promoted preventative care.

Cordero then turned to giving a Marxist history of the rise of private health care, analyzing the political economy of it, and the fact that it was in the government’s self-interest to take care of the health of its workers. In typical Proyecto fashion, part of her analysis was posing very specific questions that served as a guide for an inquiry into reality. She asked, why do we even have private medicine where the doctor charges the patient for the service? “La medicina

privada se desarrolló en la sociedad industrial” (Private medicine developed in industrial society) she explained. The growth of cities and industry led to epidemics and millions of people dying in Europe, which led to issues such as the hunger and homelessness of migrant workers in growing cities, and infant mortality. “En este periodo las clases que controlaban el gobierno no asumieron responsabilidad por proteger la salud de la comunidad en general” (In this period the classes that controlled the government did not assume responsibility for protecting the health of the community in general). Curative medicine was exclusively for kings, nobles, and owners. The bad health situation in the cities, “llegó a amenazar la productividad y la estabilidad del nuevo sistema económico y el gobierno comenzó a tomar medidas” (came to threaten the productivity and stability of the new economic system and the government began to take steps). The growing middle class also led to more private doctors. Cordero compared the system in Europe to the system in the United States:

A diferencia de Europa, en Estados Unidos la medicina privada creció sin control convirtiéndose los médicos privados en un poderoso grupo de presión organizados en la Asociación Médica para proteger sus intereses económicos.

(As opposed to Europe, in United States private medicine grew without control, and private doctors became a powerful lobbying group organized into the Medical Association that applied pressure in order to protect their economic interests).

In the United States, private medicine was clearly defined as a business responding to economic laws of the system “por lo cual su motivación principal son sus ganancias” (for which their main motivation is profits). As a result, “se dirigen entonces los grandes recursos de esa sociedad hacia las áreas que dejan más ganancias” (the majority of the resources of that society are directed towards those areas which leave most profits) which is basically curative medicine.

Cordero explained how all of this money was going towards treating things that could have been prevented. More and more services were sent to specialists, and meanwhile, the curative medicine for the poor was limited. It was handled by public hospitals in cities where

budgets were precarious. Cordero described a situation where more and more health issues were being taken to a doctor, even simple ones.

As Cordero wrote, one of the most dramatic examples of problems caused by the privatization of medicine in Puerto Rico was related to childbirth. Before, women would work with a midwife, going to a doctor only in complicated cases. But Cordero described the situation that had become common for expecting mothers in Puerto Rico:

Se desarrollan entonces modalidades como inducir los partos con drogas a conveniencia de los medicos y el uso de ayuda mecanica (“Forces”) bajo anestesia para acelerar la segunda etapa del parto. Le sigue la moda de las Cesareas donde los Obstetras pueden practicar la cirugia, el parto coge menos tiempo y se cobra mas.

(So then certain modes/techniques are developed to induce labor with drugs so that it is convenient for doctors, and the use of mechanical help (“Forces”) under anesthesia in order to accelerate the second stage of labro. This trend is followed by Ceseareans where the Obs are able to practice surgery, and also the labor takes less time and costs more).

In addition to induced labor, Cordero pointed out the high number of women in Puerto Rico who obtained unnecessary C-sections.⁵¹

For Cordero, liberation meant having optimum health at all levels. She wrote, “la salud se define no solo como la ausencia de enfermedad sino como el estado óptimo de salud física, mental y social” (health is defined not only by the absence of sickness but as the optimum state of physical, mental, and social health). She highlighted that health was a human right, citing the “Declaración Universal de Derechos del Hombre de las Naciones Unidas” (the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Within the Proyecto, there was a focus on physical strengthening as well, particularly in the area of martial arts. Cordero understood that a true and total sense of liberation would result from having self-knowledge and using that knowledge

⁵¹ For more on reproductive health and imperialism in Puerto Rico, see Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*.

within a setting where there are no real, material restrictions for those who have decolonized themselves from the inside out.

“Racismo contra nosotros mismos”⁵²

On November 3, 1988, Cordero published an article in *El Nuevo Día* entitled, “Y tu abuela dónde está?” (And your grandmother, where is she?). The article’s title was a reference to the fact that Luis Muñoz Marín’s grandmother, a black woman, was never presented publicly in Puerto Rican society. Interestingly, given the conceptual theme of this chapter, Cordero used her 1966 passport photo as her author photo for this article. This was the passport that Cordero obtained after her deportation in Ghana, while in Spain, and it is the passport photo in which she looks the most serious. It is interesting that Cordero would use a photo of herself taken twenty-two years before. In the article, she wrote, “El tema del racismo está de moda en Puerto Rico” (the topic of racism is in style in Puerto Rico). She explained that before discussions of racism were in style, those who brought up the issue were accused of agitating a problem that did not really exist, and that people would say, “En Puerto Rico no hay racismo, todos convivimos como hermanos” (in Puerto Rico there is no racism, we all live as brothers and sisters).⁵³ But she wrote that now people were talking about it on the Ojeda show [look up] and it had become one of the main controversies of this political campaign. Politicians accusing each other of racism... “y es imagen obligada en los anuncios de campaña ver a un político ‘blanquito’ en mangas de camisa bailando o cantando salsa o jugando baloncesto entre los prietos de los barrios y caseríos” (and that obligatory image in the campaign advertisements of a white politician in a folkloric shirt

⁵² “The racism we direct towards ourselves.”

⁵³ For more on the gran familia narrative in Puerto Rico, which described Puerto Ricans of all races getting along happily, see Carlos Alamo, *Seams of Empire*.

dancing or singing salsa or playing basketball amongst black people in the barrios and public housing). Cordero discussed the way that blackness was relegated to the folkloric, and she did not shy away from naming the whiteness of the politicians.⁵⁴ She continued, “Salío el tema a la calle, pero nuestra abuela individual y colectiva todavía ‘oculta está’” (the topic has emerged onto the streets, but our individual and collective grandmother is still hidden).

Cordero’s discussion of black visibility, her attention to the material effects of visual hierarchies, and her honest acknowledgement that physically and visibly black people are treated differently was ahead of its time:

Lo que se discutió en el programa de Ojeda fue principalmente el discrimen racial contra el sector innegablemente negro de nuestra clase media baja, empujando para subir de clase. Y para ellos, el Gobierno anunció que piensa ponerle el nombre de Rafael Cortijo al lujoso y ‘cachendoso’ Centro de Bellas Artes.

(what was discussed on the Ojeda show was principally racial discrimination against the undeniably black sector of our lower middle class, pushing to rise in class status. And for them, the government announced that they are planning to name the new fancy Center for Fine Arts after Rafael Cortijo).

Organizers today are still working to consistently center the experiences of visually black people in academic and organizing spaces, probably because it is uncomfortable to admit the ways that people have been conditioned to be phenomenologically repelled by black people.⁵⁵ Cordero was also perspicacious in her insistence on highlighting the intertwined nature of race and class.

There are still divides between anti-racist and anti-capitalist activists, and although racism and capitalism are intimately intertwined, the conversations and demographics between these activist communities have not always overlapped. She highlights the pinnacle of the ways that racism and capitalism intertwine by pointing out the irony of naming the prestigious Bella Artes theater

⁵⁴ Isar Godreau, *Scripting Blackness*.

⁵⁵ For more on blackness and embodiment, see work of Harvey Young and Nicole Fleetwood.

after the Afro-Puerto Rican musician Rafael Cortijo, when theater would not be easily accessible to poor, black Puerto Ricans who looked like him.⁵⁶

Cordero pointed out that all this attention towards black people is because the elections in San Juan are going to be decided by the people who live in the caseríos, or public housing projects:

Si Jesse Jackson, quien obtuvo los votos de los boricuas en Estados Unidos, tocó pandereta y bailó en salsa en los barrios y caseríos usando una “T-shirt”, pues el Gobernador de Puerto Rico, ‘blanquito’ de Ponce se le ocurrió irse detrás de la gente a celebrar la parada del 4 de Julio en la mismita playa cantando salsa y obligando a la Guardia Nacional a desfilar por la arena mojándose sus immaculadas y brillantes botas militares.

(If Jesse Jackson, who obtained votes from Puerto Ricans in the United States, played the pandereta and danced salsa in the barrios and public housing wearing a T-shirt, then the Governor of Puerto Rico, white from Ponce, decide to go behind people’s backs [?] and celebrate the 4th of July parade in the same beach, singing salsa and forcing the National Guard to march through the sand, wetting their immaculate and brilliant military boots).

This is an example of the way that Cordero continued to focus on local and transnational politics towards the end of her life. She pointed out the way that politicians from both the United States and Puerto Rico pandered to Black and working-class people in Puerto Rico.

As she did in her medical article, Cordero made use of what seemed like a bad situation in order to develop an analysis that would reveal deeper truths about what was going on in society. She wrote, “Pero todo este bembeteo puede ayudarnos, permitiéndonos examinar el racismo más profundo oculto en nuestra sociedad, la negación de nuestra naturaleza como pueblo mulato y caribeño, el *racismo contra nosotros mismos*” (But all of this talking can help us, allowing us to examine the more profound and hidden racism in our society, the negation of our nature as a mulato and Caribbean people, the *racism we direct towards ourselves*).⁵⁷ Now that discussions about race were a part of public discourse, Cordero felt that this created an

⁵⁶ Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, *El entierro de Cortijo* (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1983).

⁵⁷ Emphasis is Cordero’s.

opportunity for people to talk about the deeper racism which remained hidden in the society, which led to the negation of Puerto Ricans as a mulato and Caribbean, and most importantly it led to internalized racism that people directed towards themselves. Cordero especially emphasizes the racism that occurs at the personal level, and she repeats the phrase, “racismo contra nosotros mismos,” later in the article.

As she took advantage of the opportunity to analyze racism in Puerto Rico, she began by posing question, a reflection of the scientific method she used throughout her life and promoted within the Proyecto. Her questions about racism were, “Cuál es su naturaleza? Cuáles son sus causas? Cuáles son sus consecuencias?” (What is its nature? What are its causes? What are its consequences?). In order to answer these questions, Cordero began by providing a history of Puerto Rico, something that was also typical within Proyecto documents. When trying to explain a particular social reality, the group usually produced materials that revealed the historical roots of whatever the issue was, a method which was partly Marxist (a historical materialist approach, which analyzes the political economic realities that shape historical moments) but also very important in the case of Puerto Rico, where people have been deprived of their history. Cordero explained that the history of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean was characterized by the violent conquest of indigenous societies, the economic exploitation of African slaves on sugar cane plantations, “y el control político y económico por una potencia europea” (and political and economic control by a European power). Amidst this political and economic exploitation and control, a particular culture developed. Cordero explained, “desarrollamos nacionalidades—culturas propias resultado de la mezcla racial y cultural, forjadas en el crisol de esa realidad” (we developed nationalities—our own cultures that are the result of our racial and cultural mixing,

forged in the crucible of that reality). Cordero asserted that a distinct culture arose out of the economic and political reality in Puerto Rico.

Cordero was careful to note that the racial understandings in Puerto Rico had to do with the colonial powers which had controlled the island. She wrote,

Durante casi 500 años, Puerto Rico ha estado bajo el control de otro país. Primero bajo España, un país que se considera blanco, aunque fue conquistado durante 800 años por los moros. Ahora somos de los Estados Unidos, un país donde el racismo se manifiesta en todos los aspectos de esa sociedad.

(During almost 500 years, Puerto Rico has been under the control of another country. First under Spain, a country that considers itself white, even though it was conquered during 800 years by the Moors. Now we belong to the United States, a country where racism manifests in all aspects of that society).

Cordero made a connection between the racism found in Puerto Rico, and the history of racial negation in Spain, and the reality of structural racism in the United States. Cordero explained that Puerto Rico had been under the control of these two countries, implying that this colonial control has affected the development of racism on the island.

In another part of the article that is very reminiscent of the Proyecto's work, Cordero wrote,

Se desarrollaron y utilizaron diversas instituciones para controlarnos, desde las represivas de control directo como los ejércitos, Guardia Nacional o Policía, hasta las instituciones que forman o socializan al individuo para que este internalice y se someta voluntariamente a ese control. Esa instituciones socializantes (la escuela, la iglesia, los medios de comunicación, etc.) tratan de lograr que el individuo se sienta que no vale nada, impotente para luchar y dependiente de las autoridades.

(Diverse institutions have been developed and used in order to control us, from the repressive ones of direct control like the armies, National Guard or police, to the institutions that form or socialize the individual so that they submit voluntarily and internalize that control. Those socializing institutions (the school, the church, the media, etc.) try to get the individual to feel that they are not worth anything, impotent to fight and dependent on authority).

Proyecto documents constantly discuss institutions of control. In fact, the same three socializing institutions that Cordero mentions in this article are the one mentioned in various Proyecto documents: the school, the church, and the media. And the role of socializing institutions and

repressive institutions of direct control are explained in the same way as they were described in Proyecto documents. The role of these institutions is not only to control people through force, but to socialize individuals so that they submit voluntarily and internalize that control, as Cordero explained. Thus, the control was not only physical, but also mental. The effect of this direct and indirect control is that people feel worthless, impotent, unable to fight against the system, and dependent on authority. Thus, Cordero took one of the main lessons of the Proyecto and shared it in a highly public venue.

In addition to institutions of control, Cordero also discussed the way that culture and values were used to control people in Puerto Rico.

En Puerto Rico han utilizado en forma sistemática y deliberada la cultura y los valores de las clases dominantes para lograr que nos rechacemos a nosotros mismos impidiendo nuestra identificación afirmativa como pueblo mulato. También se nos ha aislado del resto del Caribe impidiendo nuestra identificación histórica racial como pueblo caribeño.

(In Puerto Rico they have utilized in a systematic and deliberate way the culture and the values of the dominant classes in order to get us to reject ourselves, preventing our affirmative identification as a mulato people. We have also been isolated from the rest of the Caribbean, preventing our historical-racial identification as a Caribbean people).

Cordero argued that the values and culture of the dominant classes were used to get people in Puerto Rico to reject their mulato identity, yet another mental process that had material effects. Cordero also discussed how Puerto Rico had been isolated from the rest of the Caribbean, which prevented what she called a “racial-historical identification” with the nearby islands. Cordero was attentive to the historical specificity of the region that united the islands in a way that was obscured by mental processes that separated communities that had much in common historically, demographically, and culturally.

After answering the questions she posed about the nature and causes of racism in Puerto Rico, Cordero began to answer her last question, which was about the consequences of the racism and self/auto-racism on the island. Her first answer was to address the ways that racism

and auto-racism affected people's sense of self-worth. It made people think they were not worth anything, that being black or mulato was inferior and ugly, and that having curly or coarse hair meant having "bad hair." Meanwhile, people came to believe that being white meant being superior on an intellectual, physical, and cultural level. It meant being beautiful and having straight hair meant having good hair. Cordero made a connection between this glorification and adoration of whiteness and submission when she concluded, "Por lo tanto debemos someternos a los amos blancos y querer ser como ellos" (thus, we should submit to the white masters and want to be like them). It was astute of Cordero to make the connection between the desire to be like the white masters, and the decision to submit to their authority.

The second way that Cordero explains that racism affects Puerto Ricans was at the level of solidarity building. She wrote,

Nos divide. Los más claros de los más oscuros, hasta dentro de las familias, evitando que nos podamos unir como pueblo. Se crea una obsesión con lograr que nos consideren blancos subiendo de clase, separándonos de nuestros familiares más oscuros, o casándonos con personas más claras para mejorar la raza. (Consideramos posible convertirnos en blancos debido a la flexibilidad de la línea imaginaria que nos divide). Hasta el extremo de causar una locura o esquizofrenia social en la cual algunos ya llegamos a considerarnos blancos, negando nuestra indiscutible realidad mulata.

(It divides us. The lighter ones from the darker ones, even within families, preventing us from uniting as a people. We become obsessed with getting people to consider us white as we go up in class status, separating ourselves from our darker family members, or marrying lighter skinned people in order to improve the race. (We consider it possible to become white due to the flexibility of the imaginary line that divides us). Even to the extreme of causing a madness or social schizophrenia in which some of us begin to think of ourselves as white, negating our undeniable mulato reality).

It is powerful that Cordero was thinking about the desire to be white as a mental disorder, or what she calls a "social schizophrenia." Although this point is about how structural and auto-racism divides families and communities, she again brought it back to how much of racial understanding was mental, and also the impact that racism had on people's mental health. Also, she made the very astute point that the desire to be white, and the efforts people took to be white,

whether it was marrying the right person or choosing the right job, worked because the imaginary line that determined who was and was not white was flexible. In this statement, Cordero explained the instability of race, by showing how much of it depended on mental processes and societal standards that were not fixed. She truly sounds ahead of her time when it comes to these points.

Later in the article, Cordero talks about racism and solidarity on a broader level, not just at the level of families or in Puerto Rico. She explained,

Evita que nos podamos unir con otros pueblos. Que sean más oscuros que nosotros ya sean del Caribe o con los americanos negros en Estados Unidos para luchar contra situaciones de común opresión.

(It prevents us from joining with other peoples. That they are more obscure than we are either of the Caribbean or with black Americans in the United States to fight against situations of common oppression).

Here she was talking about the way that not recognizing their “racial-historical identity” led to Puerto Ricans not uniting with peoples who were physically darker, whether they were from the Caribbean or Black Americans from the United States. This lack of unity meant that Puerto Ricans were not uniting with other people who were facing a common oppressor. This is a very important articulation of a viewpoint that Cordero had throughout her life, even back in 1964 when she wrote to Malcolm X.

The third way that Cordero explained that racism and auto-racism affected Puerto Ricans was in the way that it affected identity. She explained,

Debilita nuestra identidad como puertorriqueños. La negación racial afecta fundamentalmente nuestra capacidad para identificarnos afirmativamente como puertorriqueños, ya que son categorías sociales intrínsecamente relacionadas. Es un factor en la esquizofrenia, confusión o inseguridad que se manifiesta también sobre nuestra puertorriqueñidad, especialmente entre los sectores de clase media y que se dramatiza en el constante debate sobre nuestra “crisis de identidad.”

(It weakens our identity as Puerto Ricans. Racial negation fundamentally affects our ability to identify ourselves affirmatively as Puerto Ricans, since they are intrinsically related social categories. It is a factor in the schizophrenia, confusion or insecurity that also manifests itself on

our Puerto Ricanness, especially among the middle class sectors and that is dramatized in the constant debate about our "identity crisis").

Cordero argued that Puerto Rican identity and blackness were social categories that were intrinsically related, but the inability of some Puerto Ricans to see the connection between the two categories led to more mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, confusion and insecurity. Interestingly, she explained that this confusion manifested especially within the middle class, and she pointed out that there was already a popular debate about a Puerto Rican "identity crisis," but she pinpoints racial negation as one of the causes of this crisis. However, she pointed out that the relationship between Puerto Rican identity was not as easy to avoid in the United States, and she noted the extraordinary resistance to cultural assimilation of more than 40% of "nuestro pueblo obrero emigrado a los Estados Unidos ya por tres generaciones. El racismo de la sociedad de Estados Unidos nos ha confrontado allá con nuestra realidad racial y nos ha obligado a afirmar nuestra identidad nacional."

In very clear terms, Cordero explained that another effect of the racism is the way it influenced mental health. She wrote, "afecta nuestra salud mental. La negación racial es un factor importante en los altísimos niveles de violencia homicida y suicida en nuestra sociedad" (it affects our mental health. Racial negation is an important factor in the very high levels of homicidal and suicidal violence in our society). Cordero made the connection between an individual mental health condition caused by racism, and broadened it so that its significance as a social problem could become apparent. She explained how the high levels of homicide and suicide in the society could be traced back to the mental health problems caused by racial negation. This passage resonates with the longer medical article that Cordero wrote, in which she made connections between mental health and social problems.

The end of Cordero's article is especially powerful. She concluded that addressing auto-racism was urgent, in order to improve the mental health of the people, to strengthen Puerto Rican national identity, and to lead to greater unity and capacity to struggle creatively in all social areas.

Este análisis del *racismo contra nosotros mismos* señala la importancia y la urgencia de contrarrestar este proceso para mejorar la salud mental de nuestro pueblo; fortalecer nuestra identidad nacional; unirnos y aumentar así nuestra capacidad de lucha creativa en todas las áreas del quehacer social.

(This analysis of the racism towards ourselves shows the importance and the urgency of counteracting this process in order to improve the mental health of our people; to strengthen our national identity; to unite and increase our capacity for creative struggle in all social areas).

In these lines, it is beautiful that Cordero prioritizes mental health and creative struggle.

Although national identity has been a constant in social movements, Cordero's emphasis on mental health and creativity also makes her seem ahead of her time.

Cordero ended her article with a particularly rousing call to action, as she situated Puerto Rico firmly within the context of people of color of the Third World. She proclaimed that Puerto Rico needed to claim its black ancestry so that they could take their place in a struggle that would displace the dominant societies. She wrote,

Es tiempo ya de sacar a nuestra abuela a la luz pública, *precisamente* porque es “prieta de a verdad”. Y es tiempo ya de que tomemos nuestro lugar entre la mayoría de la humanidad que vive en Asia, África y América Latina y que junto a los demás pueblos del Caribe y de América Latina proclamemos con orgullo nuestra realidad predominantemente negra, mulata, india y mestiza. Las sociedades dominantes están en un proceso de decadencia social, cultural, política y económica y la iniciativa para el desarrollo futuro de la humanidad va a pasar a manos del tercer mundo. O nos hundimos en el barco de la negación o saltamos hacia el futuro, afirmándonos como pueblo.

(It is time to bring our grandmother into the public light, precisely because she is “black for real”. And it is time that we take our place among the majority of humanity that lives in Asia, Africa and Latin America and that along with the other peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America proclaim with pride our predominantly black, mulatto, indian and mestizo reality. Dominant societies are in a process of social, cultural, political and economic decadence and the initiative for the future development of humanity will pass into the hands of the third world. Either we sink into the ship of denial or jump into the future, affirming ourselves as a people).

For Cordero, the broader liberation of Puerto Rico and the world began at the individual level. The first step was claiming one's black grandmother. Once that happened, unity could be achieved with other peoples of the world in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, places that Cordero pointed out were the majority of humanity. She said this place needed to be claimed with pride, since the future development of humanity lay in the hands of the Third World. She laid it bare: either Puerto Ricans would sink in a ship of denial or they would leap into the future. But again, that leap into the future was first dependent on Puerto Ricans affirming themselves at an individual level and as a black, mulatto, Indian, and mestizo people.

Cordero ended her article with a poem by Fortunato Vizcarrondo, a Puerto Rican poet and musician, who posed the question, "y tu agüela, a'onde ejta?..." after calling out the white person being addressed in the poem who was afraid that society would find out who their grandmother was. Cordero made sure to end her article with a biographical line that highlighted her work in the diaspora and in community health: "La autora es Doctora en Medicina y ha llevado a cabo estudios sobre salud de la Comunidad en Puerto Rico y en Africa" (the author is a medical doctor who has conducted studies in community health in Puerto Rico and Africa).

Cordero as Social Biographer

When Inés María Mendoza de Muñoz, the wife of Luis Muñoz Marín, passed away, Cordero wrote an article comparing Mendoza to her own mother. The article was published in *El Mundo* on August 19, 1990, and it is an example of Cordero writing her own social biography, in which she places the lives of her mother and Mendoza into a broader social context. The article comments on early twentieth century feminism in Puerto Rico, explaining how Mendoza and Garcés exercised their leftist politics despite political and gender constraints. Thus, the article is

also about various political threads post-1898, and how people maintained radical viewpoints within a repressive context. Thus, the article is also an example of the long resistance, of the ways people maintain and transform their politics.

In the article, Cordero explained the relationship between her mother and Mendoza, also placing it within the context of the rise of the Popular Democratic Party. Cordero wrote, “Ana Livia Garcés, fue una de las mejores amigas de doña Inés en los años formativos del Partido Popular Democrático, considerándose a ambas más radicales que sus compañeros”⁵⁸ (Ana Livia Garcés, was one of the best friends of Doña Inés in the formative years of the Popular Democratic Party, both considering themselves more radical than their companions). With this statement, Cordero made it clear that something like a colonial contradiction could exist within a marriage, where divergent politics coexisted. She also framed what she would be doing in the article, which serves as a powerful model for what a social biography can be: “Inés María es nuestra, el producto de nuestra realidad, un reflejo de lo mejor de este pueblo. Trataremos a grandes trazos de señalar el trasfondo social que la formó, utilizando para lograrlo las percepciones y experiencias de mi madre, Viví”⁵⁹ (Ines María is ours, the product of our reality, a reflection of the best of our people. We will try to outline in broad strokes the social background that formed her, using the perceptions and experiences of my mother, Viví). Cordero indicated that Mendoza was the product and reflection of the Puerto Rican reality, and her goal in the article was to provide details about the social context that formed this individual. In addition to this article serving as a social biography written by Cordero, it is also one of the most

⁵⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

condensed examples of Cordero's views on gender. Interestingly, although Cordero was often the only woman in many of the settings she was in, whether it was in the medical field or in organizing spaces, she did not address gender much in her writing, and even Proyecto materials deal less explicitly with gender than they do with race. However, this article provides evidence of what Cordero thought about gender roles. In a way, her lack of addressing it had to do with her philosophy around gender. For her, it was not so much about setting women apart in their own movement, but more the idea that women could do whatever men did, and that this did not need a separate movement, but more of a recognition women's capacity.

Cordero frames the article by beginning with one of the issues she mentions in her article on race, which is the way that Puerto Ricans have been denied the details of their own history. Cordero began her article saying, it is important for a country whose knowledge and value of their own history has been negated, to try and understand their great figures “más allá del recuento anecdotal o la alabanza que las mistifica, evitando que podamos aspirar a ser igual que ellas”⁶⁰ (Beyond anecdotal accounts or the praise that mystifies them, preventing that we can aspire to be equal to them). Cordero made a methodological intervention here, and was promoting the role of social biographies in oppressed communities in ways she may not even have been aware of. Social biographies are powerful tools for repressed and oppressed societies like Puerto Rico where people have been deprived of their history. For these societies, being able to zoom into one individual becomes a powerful way to understand and relate and situate oneself in history.

In the article, one of the larger contexts that Cordero places her mother and Mendoza in is the post-1898 moment in which the United States takes control of Puerto Rico.

⁶⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

llegaron a la vida acompañados por la invasión norteamericana y se formaron en el tormentoso periodo de la conquista y colonización de Puerto Rico y de las transformaciones económicas que desembocaron en la creciente proletarianización y explotación de nuestro pueblo obrero por las grandes corporaciones azucareras norteamericanas.⁶¹

(Came to life accompanied by the American invasion and formed in the stormy period of the conquest and colonization of Puerto Rico and the economic transformations that led to the growing proletarianization and exploitation of our working people by the large American sugar corporations.)

During this period, both the political and economic status of Puerto Rico was changing. The economic exploitation created a growing work class that would go on to protest their conditions and fight for their rights.

Although they were both born at the beginning of the twentieth century (Garcés in 1901, Mendoza in 1908), and grew up during a period in which Puerto Rico's self-determination was limited by the United States, they also grew up during a period of great social activism in Puerto Rico. Cordero wrote that Mendoza and her mother understood that they lived during a moment of "cambio revolucionario"⁶² (revolutionary change). Cordero continued, explaining,

Eran aún jóvenes cuando en los 20's, el conflicto de clase estalló en las huelgas de los obreros de la caña, los ferrocarriles y los despalillados de tabaco, huelgas que con ideología socialista, arroparon al país; y tomaba auge también el Nacionalismo Albizuista. El acercamiento posterior entre ambas luchas amenazó el control norteamericano sobre Puerto Rico y se desató una represión violenta contra ambos movimientos que culminó con la masacre de Ponce.⁶³

(They were still young when in the 20's, class conflict erupted in the strikes of sugarcane workers, railroads and tobacco destemming, strikes that with socialist ideology, clothed the country; And Albizuist Nationalism was also booming. The later rapprochement between the two struggles threatened US control over Puerto Rico and a violent repression of both movements culminated in the Ponce massacre.)

⁶¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Cordero acknowledged that as her mother and Mendoza witnessed the mobilization of the Puerto Rican people, they also witnessed the reactionary and violent repression, which culminated in the Ponce massacre of 1937.

Se criaron en la costa cañera en Arecibo y en Naguabo, municipio este que ganaron los socialistas en el 1920, eligiendo a un alcalde negro y era sólo natural que el Socialismo y el Nacionalismo se convirtieran en las dos corrientes principales que motivaron sus vidas.⁶⁴

(They grew up on the sugarcane coast in Arecibo and in Naguabo, a municipality that was won by the Socialists in 1920, electing a black mayor and it was only natural that Socialism and Nationalism became the two main currents that motivated their lives.)

Here we see an example of Cordero showing how people are shaped by their context, explaining how the fact that they grew up in certain parts of the island exposed them to the political strains of socialism and nationalism, which would go on to influence their ideas for the rest of their lives.

Fue este también el periodo de crecimiento del movimiento feminista en los países capitalistas industriales que, asociado a las luchas obreras, demandaba la igualdad política y educativa de la mujer, influencia que se dejó sentir en Puerto Rico en la militancia de las obreras del despalillado y que simbolizó la líder obrera y feminista, Juana Colón.⁶⁵

(This was also the period of growth of the feminist movement in the industrial capitalist countries, which, coupled with the workers' struggles, demanded the political and educational equality of women, an influence that was felt in Puerto Rico in the militancy of the workers of destemming and Which symbolized the labor and feminist leader, Juana Colón.)

Cordero was careful to also include the role of feminism in the social context, showing how not only the struggle of workers, but the struggles of women, and particularly women who were workers, influenced her mother and Mendoza.

En Puerto Rico, las clases dominantes imponían a la sociedad y especialmente a la clase media, su visión de la mujer como propiedad reproductiva del hacendado y como adorno que éste utilizaba para hacer alarde de su dinero. Las doctrinas de la Iglesia Católica reforzaban esa

⁶⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

sumisión de la mujer. Se difundían también valores racistas de rechazo de nuestro pueblo y cultura mulata y caribeña.⁶⁶

(In Puerto Rico, the dominant classes imposed on society and especially the middle class their views of women as the reproductive property of the landowner and as an ornament used by the latter to flaunt their money. The doctrines of the Catholic Church reinforced this submission of the woman. Racist values of rejection of our mulatto and Caribbean people and culture were also spread.)

Cordero did not just discuss what women accomplished, she also discussed the ways that women were repressed before the women's movement came to Puerto Rico. Especially in the middle classes and due to the influence of the church, women were seen as property whose role was to reproduce, and this also intertwined with racism in the country. Thus, by providing this context, Cordero highlighted just how path-breaking the work and ideas of her mother, Mendoza, and even Cordero herself were.

Cordero did a good job of showing how individuals in a person's life could have an influence that counteracted the hegemonic societal forces that shaped people in mainstream ways. Cordero posed the question for her readers, asking how the home life of each of these women shaped their political ideas, and liberated them from the societal constraints that limited other women: "Debemos preguntarnos qué proceso formativo en sus hogares lleva a la liberación de esas cadenas con las cuales la sociedad pretendía amarrarlas" (We should ask ourselves what formative process took place in their homes that led them to the liberation from the chains that society was trying to tie them up with). When it came to her own mother, Cordero knew that the source of her rebellion to the societal norms came from her father, or Cordero's grandfather.

En el caso de Viví, fue su padre, don Emilio Garcés, maestro de escuela, ávido lector autodidacta, agnóstico y libre pensador, masón y anticlerical, quien había aprendido a tocar congas con los esclavos en San Germán, quien estableció con su hija una relación de mentor, estimulándole su desarrollo intelectual y su sentido de autovalía como persona. Don Emilio tenía una fuerte y recia

⁶⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

personalidad que lo llevaba a enfrentarse abiertamente a los convencionalismos sociales hipócritas de la sociedad arecibeña, al racismo y en especial, a la Iglesia Católica.⁶⁷

(In the case of Viví, it was his father, Don Emilio Garcés, a schoolteacher, avid self-taught reader, agnostic and free thinker, Mason and anticlerical, who had learned to play congas with the slaves in San Germán, who established with his daughter a Relationship of mentor, stimulating his intellectual development and his sense of self-worth as a person. Don Emilio had a strong and strong personality that led him to openly face the hypocritical social conventions of the Arecibe society, to racism and especially to the Catholic Church.)

Emilio Garcés was an autodidactic schoolteacher who was also agnostic, a free-thinker, a free mason, and anticlerical. Cordero knew much of this about her grandfather because she had conducted an interview with her mother. Her grandfather represented a particular population of people at the turn of the century who were experimenting with alternative political modes at the turn of the century.⁶⁸ Cordero discussed that he learned to play congas with slaves in San Germán, which would have been possible given that slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico in 1873.⁶⁹ As we saw in her newspaper article about race, it is very interesting that there could be this denial when the history was so recent. But again, in the case of her grandfather and mother, we see a situation where an individual, one on one relationship was able to supersede or counteract the societal forces. By taking on the role of mentor for his daughter, Emilio Garcés was able to ensure that Doña Viví would grow up to be the independent spirit who would then raise Cordero. This type of intergenerational passing on of radical ideas between family members is another example of the long resistance—the intimate, one on one transferal of political ideas in domestic spaces. For Mendoza, her father also influenced her political leanings, as Cordero notes that Mendoza's father was part of the Unionist party and a follower of the influential, pro-autonomy politician Luis Muñoz Rivera, who in turn was Muñoz Marín's father.

⁶⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶⁸ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 16.

⁶⁹ Carrión, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History*, 114.

At this point in the article, we see Cordero expressing the clearest articulation of feminism that we have from her.

El feminismo de ambas no surge entonces de la rebeldía contra la autoridad de los hombres, no desemboca en guerra contra estos, ni en el rechazo de su identificación afirmativa como mujeres y madres, sino que está basado en sentirse iguales a los hombres, lo cual les permitirá establecer relaciones de cariño y respeto mutuo con sus esposos, aunque matizadas por su aceptación del rol principal del hombre en la sociedad y dentro del matrimonio.⁷⁰

(The feminism of both does not arise from rebellion against the authority of men, does not lead to war against them, nor in the rejection of their affirmative identification as women and mothers, but is based on feeling equal to men, which Will allow them to establish relations of affection and mutual respect with their husbands, although they are nuanced by their acceptance of the main role of man in society and in marriage.)

Cordero implied here that for her, an effective or appropriate feminism, was not about rebelling against the authority of men, or fighting with them, and not about rejecting their affirmative identification as a woman or mother, but was instead based on a feeling of being equal to men. This set up allowed women like her mother and Mendoza, in Cordero's analysis, to establish relationships of care and mutual respect with their husbands, but she did seem to say with a hint of despair that they still had to endure or put up with, or defer to men as they occupied a principal role in society and within the marriage. In a later part of the article, she wrote that Mendoza was "Al frente y al lado, pero nunca detrás de ese gran hombre, se encontraba esa mujer"⁷¹ (in front of and next to, but never behind that great man, was that woman). The priority for Cordero was for a woman never to feel that she was inferior to a man.

At the same time that they rebelled against gender roles, Garcés and Mendoza also rebelled against racial and religious norms, and Cordero wrote that they rejected "los valores de los "blanquitos" de nuestra sociedad lo cual, junto a sus posiciones de izquierda, las someterá a

⁷⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁷¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

la persecución política y al ataque de la Iglesia Católica” (the values of the whites of our society which, together with their left positions, subjected them to political persecution and the attack of the Catholic Church). She acknowledged that both of these women dealt with political persecution throughout their lives.

Both Mendoza and Viví began their activism early in life.

A Inés María la botaron de la “Central High” por ser miembro del Partido Nacionalista y por su militancia en la defensa del español como vehículo de enseñanza. Según Viví, fue cuando Inés exhortaba a estudiantes y maestros en un mitin público organizado como protesta a su despido, que Muñoz se enamoró de ella.⁷²

(Inés María was kicked out of the "Central High" for being a member of the Nationalist Party and for her militancy in the defense of Spanish as a teaching vehicle. According to Viví, it was when Inés exhorted students and teachers in a public rally organized in protest of her dismissal, that Muñoz fell in love with her.)

The relationship between Mendoza and Muñoz Marín is another example of a radical relationship that demonstrates how love and activism intertwine. The Catholic Church in Puerto Rico looked down on Muñoz Marín and Mendoza since they lived together for ten years before he divorced his first wife, Muna Lee, and Cordero interpreted that these moral attacks on the couple masked pro-United States views. This passage also highlights Mendoza’s support of the movement to promote Spanish-language instruction within schools, a movement that Garcés supported too. Later in the article, Cordero wrote, “Viví participando en la lucha tras bastidores de los miles de maestros por toda la isla, enseñando en inglés sólo cuando veían acercarse a los superintendentes, lográndose así la sobrevivencia de nuestra lengua” (Viví participating in the behind-the-scenes struggle of thousands of teachers all over the island, teaching in English only when they saw approaching superintendents, thus achieving the survival of our language).

⁷² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Mendoza was critiqued for challenging relationship norms, and Cordero's mother was critiqued for challenging gender, political, and religious norms. Cordero wrote,

Viví también fue el blanco de las críticas sociales desde que, todavía muchacha, corría bicicleta por Arecibo, algo que sólo se atrevía a hacer otra muchacha a quien apodaban Paca "La Macha". Ya profesora en la escuela Normal, el periódico católico de la UPR demandaba continuamente su despido por atea, comunista e independentista. Al no poder despedirla por tener permanencia, Ramón Mellado Parsons, entonces decano, le quitó el curso en controversia, 'La Escuela en el Mundo Contemporáneo' que había enseñado durante años, tratando así de acallar su voz.⁷³

(Viví was also the target of social criticism since, as a girl, she was cycling through Arecibo, something that only dared to do another girl who was nicknamed Paca "La Macha". Already a teacher in the Normal school, the Catholic newspaper of the UPR demanded continually her dismissal because she was atheist, communist and an independentista. Ramon Mellado Parsons, then dean, took away the course in controversy, "The School in the Contemporary World" that she had taught for years, trying to silence her voice.)

The fact that Viví was criticized for riding a bicycle gives a sense of the social constraints for women in Puerto Rico, and is also a reminder that the women's liberation movement did not proceed at the same rate in both Puerto Rico and the United States. However, Garcés also faced challenges throughout her life due to her identification (whether self-imposed or externally-imposed) as an atheist, communist, and supporter of independence.

In terms of their relationships with their husbands, Cordero provides a nuanced analysis of how these women were able to maintain their political perspectives and actions even though the views and actions of their husbands did not exactly match up with their viewpoints. When Garcés died, Mendoza wrote a letter, and even she acknowledged, "Y siempre estaba Viví cerca de él—mucho más de izquierda que él" (and Viví was always close to him—much more leftist than him). Cordero expanded on this point, and wrote,

Sus matrimonios con figuras públicas prominentes puede haber frenado en ambas el desarrollo de su capacidad creativa y limitado su acción política independiente pero al mismo tiempo, en el caso de Inés María, le brindó la oportunidad de participar en forjar el programa socialista e independentista original del Partido Popular, representando a través de los años su ala más

⁷³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

radical. No podemos dejar de señalar que Muñoz comenzó su vida política como organizador del Partido Socialista y que era también independentista.⁷⁴

(Their marriages with prominent public figures may have slowed their development of their creative capacity and limited their independent political action, but at the same time, in the case of Inés María, it provided her the opportunity to participate in forging the original socialist and independence program of the Popular Party, representing through the years its most radical wing. We can not fail to point out that Muñoz began his political life as an organizer of the Socialist Party and that he was also an independentista).

Garcés and Mendoza had to navigate their personal politics with husbands who were public figures. Even though such relationships may have been limiting at times, Cordero was right to point out that it also offered an opportunity for these women. For Mendoza, she was able to participate in and develop early strains of the Populares Party that were socialist and focused on independence. In fact, part of the long resistance is that Cordero acknowledged that even Muñoz Marín had his own evolution, because even though he began as an organizer for the socialist party and supported independence, he became the leader of the more reform-oriented Popular Democratic Party. This is a recurring tension in Puerto Rico, where there is a ongoing negotiation between the long-term and short-term needs and politics. This passage is an example of the prevalence of political versatility in Puerto Rico, or the frequent adjustments to political strategy.

In terms of their professional life, both Garcés and Mendoza became teachers. For both women, teaching was an opportunity to shape young people and challenge United States colonialism:

Ambas fueron maestras, Viví desde los 17 años cuando graduada de escuela superior enseñó en el Barrio Dominguito de Arecibo, experiencia formativa donde sufrió como propia la pobreza y la explotación de nuestra población rural y aprendió a ser parte de ellos y a quererlos para siempre.

⁷⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Maestras por amor y vocación, entendían su función como la de liberar las mentes de sus estudiantes para que pensarán por sí mismos en forma crítica y creativa, rescatándolos de la dependencia, el dogmatismo, el prejuicio y la superstición religiosa.⁷⁵

(Both were teachers, Viví starting at the age of 17 when she graduated from high school and taught in the Barrio Dominguito de Arecibo, a formative experience where she suffered as her own the poverty and exploitation of our rural population and learned to be part of them and to love them forever.

Teachers because of love and vocation, they understood their function as liberating the minds of their students so that they thought for themselves in a critical and creative way, rescuing them from dependence, dogmatism, prejudice and religious superstition.)

For Garcés, teaching in Arecibo meant that she confronted high levels of poverty and exploitation, and that exposure made her love and care about similar communities for the rest of her life. Cordero wrote that, as teachers, Mendoza and Garcés sought to liberate the minds of their students. What is interesting about these lines is that these were the goals of the Proyecto too, and it becomes clear how Cordero was also influenced pedagogically by her mother. In addition to being a doctor and organizer, Cordero was also a very good teacher, and these were probably skills that she acquired from being around people like her mother and Mendoza.

As Garcés and Mendoza aged, their activism continued, transforming in the same ways that Cordero's activism transformed. Mendoza continued to teach from her home, and Viví continued to teach at the university, shaping generations of teachers.

Maestras hasta el final, Inés María, después de enviudar, abrió su hogar que se caracterizó siempre por su austeridad y sencillez, para dialogar con líderes obreros y comunales y con todos aquellos que quisieron oír su voz. Viví durante años, en la escuela Normal y en los cursos de Extramuros formó generaciones de maestros que llevaron su legado por toda la isla.⁷⁶

(Teachers to the end, Inés Maria, after widowing, opened her home which was always characterized by its austerity and simplicity, to dialogue with workers and communal leaders and with all those who wanted to hear her voice. Viví for years, in the Normal school and in the extramural courses, shaped generations of teachers who carried her legacy all over the island.)

⁷⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁷⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Both of these women, with the privilege and comfort they had, did not rest on their laurels. They used their privilege to help others during every possible opportunity.

Once their husbands died, Garcés and Mendoza had opportunities to be even more outspoken. However, both women had to come to terms with the fact that lukewarm reforms had taken the place of the revolutions they had envisioned.

Se entrelazan sus vidas de nuevo cuando ya viudas, se enfrentan a la realidad de que la revolución por la cual habían luchado había logrado sólo unas reformas que habían modificado los conflictos sin resolverlos, resultando en un nuevo proceso de explotación y destrucción de nuestra economía y en una peligrosa amenaza a nuestra sobrevivencia como pueblo.⁷⁷

(Their lives are once again intertwined when, as widows, they face the reality that the revolution for which they had fought had only achieved reforms that had changed the conflicts without solving them, resulting in a new process of exploitation and destruction of our economy and In a dangerous threat to our survival as a people.)

Using Proyecto language, Cordero described that the conflicts had been modified, but not resolved, and that exploitation and the destruction of the economy continued.

According to Cordero, Mendoza and Garcés responded to these unresolved conflicts by continuing to speak out publicly. Just a few months before she passed, Garcés marched against United States militarism and interventions in Central America. Meanwhile, Mendoza supported Villa Sin Miedo (a community that defended itself against police attacks) and Jesse Jackson, and she also spoke out against the incarceration of Haitians in Puerto Rico, comparing their improvised jail an intolerable concentration camp. Both women, along with Lolita LeBrón, a former political prisoner, participated in the caravan to Juana Diaz to protest the Haitian detention. Mendoza supported the solidarity work with Nicaragua following Hurricane Joan, and she also continued to write on issues related to social justice and the defense of Puerto Rican

⁷⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

nationalism, becoming what Cordero called, “la conciencia de los líderes políticos” (the conscience of political leaders).

Cordero ended the article by writing,

Ellas dieron las peleas más duras y difíciles y cuando murieron, ya ancianas, todavía luchaban. Las produjo este pueblo y representan lo mejor de nosotros mismos, dándole verdadero significado a la palabra patriota, una de las primeras palabras que escribió Inés María. Su legado le demanda a las generaciones posteriores un compromiso similar.⁷⁸

(They gave the hardest and most difficult fight and when they died, already old, they still fought. They were produced by this community and represent the best of ourselves, giving true meaning to the word patriot, one of the first words that Ines María wrote. Their legacy demands a similar commitment from subsequent generations.)

For these women, and for Cordero, resistance was daily, life-long, and intergenerational. Cordero felt it was the duty of future generations to continue the fight begun by people like her mother and Mendoza.

Mentor and Mother

One of the ways in which Cordero expressed her activism later in life, and yet another example of her long resistance, was the ways in which she mentored and nurtured younger people and members of the group and community. Cordero took on a mother role for several of the children whose parents had to migrate to the United States for work. She took care of Malcolm, Efrain’s son; Amilcar, Carlos Cruz’s son; and Manela, Maria and Vitin’s son. She also developed a close relationship with Pawiche, David’s son. On Mother’s Day, all of these young people would send her loving Mother’s Day cards. In one particularly striking letter to Pawiche, who had migrated to the Bronx for work, Cordero offers advice that actually reveals itself to be a powerful condensation of her political views and life philosophy. The way Cordero breaks down

⁷⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; *El Mundo* article re: Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín, August 19, 1990. MC 824, 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

complex concepts in the letter helps to explain why former Proyecto members continue to use political language in ways that are not dogmatic. The letter is another example of the ways that people transfer their politics in one-on-one settings, and of how consciousness-raising happens during intimate moments.

Cordero began her letter to Pawiche with a warm greeting:

Querido Pawiche, Me sentí bien chévere cuando recibí tu carta, sonaba a ti, cariñoso y bien lindo. Primero quiero decirte que no solo confiamos en tí sino que también te estimamos y respetamos mucho, además de tenerte mucho cariño.

(Dear Pawiche, I felt very good when I received your letter, it sounded to you, affectionate and very nice. First I want to tell you that not only do we trust you, but we also cherish and respect you, as well as caring for you).

This greeting demonstrates the human and affectionate side of Cordero. Her use of Puerto Rican slang shows a certain intimacy and understanding of her members, and her recognition that Pawiche's letter sounded like him demonstrates her careful attention to each person's individuality and humanity. This is also an example of Cordero empowering a young person, working to boost their self-esteem. Telling Pawiche that she has confidence in him, and also esteems, respects, and cares about him is a powerful thing to say to a young Puerto Rican man struggling to make a life for himself in New York.

In the letter, Cordero shows her own vulnerability, telling Pawiche that she is going to explain concepts to him as a way to understand them herself:

Quiero tratar de resumirte algo, en parte para aclarármelo yo misma. Nuestro objetivo en relación a ustedes era: Que desarrollaran al máximo su capacidad como seres Humanos en lo Físico, Intelectual, Emocional y Social para que pudieran funcionar como personas Independientes, Seguras y Cariñosas.

(I want to try to summarize something, partly to clarify it myself. Our objective in relation to all of you was: That you would develop to the maximum your capacity as human beings in the Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Social [realms] so that you could function as Independent, Confident and Loving people).

As in all things Proyecto, Cordero made sure to clearly state goals at the outset. She promoted people developing themselves holistically and to the maximum possible level. The ultimate goals of Cordero and of the Proyecto as well was to develop people who were “Independent, Confident, and Loving,” words that she emphasized by capitalizing them.

Cordero wanted Pawiche to understand the goals she had in terms of a person’s human development, but she also wanted Pawiche to understand the society in which he lived. Living up to one’s potential was the goal, but in order to be successful, one had to understand the society one was up against. Cordero wrote,

Para lograr ese propósito en esta sociedad, había que entender dos cosas:

Primero Que la sociedad esta en un constante proceso de cambio como resultado de los conflictos que existen en ella y que el conflicto de clases es el principal. Te incluyo algo que escribimos hace algún tiempo sobre los objetivos que tiene el sistema para la gente. Espero que la palabrería no evite que lo leas.

Segundo Que el desarrollo del niño es un resultado del conflicto entre sus necesidades como ser humano y los objetivos de la sociedad que lo rodea. Incluyo también un análisis sobre los conflictos que tiene el adolescente con la sociedad para poder llenar sus necesidad (No se si te había dado copia de esto)

(To achieve this purpose in this society, two things had to be understood:

First That society is in a constant process of change as a result of the conflicts that exist in it and that the class conflict is the main one. I include something that we wrote some time ago about the goals the system has for people. I hope many words do not prevent you from reading it.

Second That the child's development is a result of the conflict between their needs as a human being and the goals of the society that surrounds them. I also include an analysis on the conflicts that the adolescent has with society to be able to fill their needs (I do not know if I had given you a copy of this))

Cordero was explaining some of the Proyecto’s foundational concepts. The Proyecto believed that society was constantly changing, and that these changes resulted from conflicts, primarily class conflicts. For example, after Proyecto members performed sociodramas, the improvised role plays they used for popular education purposes, the first questions they asked in the subsequent group discussion was, “what did you see?” and “what was the conflict?” Besides class conflicts between workers and owners, Proyecto members also explored conflicts that took place between friends and family members, and even personal conflicts that one could have

within oneself. The purpose of this analysis was to obtain a clearer understanding of the forces that affected society, and to use this understanding as a launching pad for creating change.

Another Proyecto concept that she expressed in this passage was the idea that the “system” had particular objectives that often clashed with the well-being of humans. This was because the system, specifically the capitalist system, increasingly values profits over people. Cordero also emphasized the scientific method in her letter to Pawiche, explaining to him that if things did not turn out as planned, he needed to understand why it did not work, and then make the necessary changes to improve his results.

Cordero continued by telling Pawiche that life was like a fight, and then she listed various tips for how to win that fight. This advice is similar to the tenets that the Proyecto was based on. The first tip was to have a long-term goal, and to actively fight in order to achieve it. The second tip was to accurately analyze reality before making and moving forward with a plan. This tip resonates with the materials the Proyecto produced that advocated the use of the scientific method for understanding society and organizing. Cordero then advised Pawiche that once he began moving forward with a plan, he had to periodically stop to evaluate himself, as well as his team. Self-evaluations and collective evaluations were indeed a critical component of the Proyecto’s work. She encouraged Pawiche to work hard even if it was difficult and required a lot of discipline: “Adiestrarte aunque sea difícil y duro y demande mucha disciplina.” This advice seems to be drawn from the early lessons that Cordero would have learned as a dancer. Cordero also told Pawiche to learn all of the time, from books and from different types of people. Interestingly, in conversations with Samuel, he has said more than once that Cordero was able to learn from, and connect with, just about everyone, always finding a common language that would allow her to communicate on a deeper level with others. Another tip that she gave

Pawiche was that he be flexible and adaptable, a trait that various people have expressed Cordero also had.

Cordero provided an astute analysis of why Pawiche was having trouble adjusting to the United States.

En relación al problema que tienes allá, te diría que era de esperarse, el sistema no te va a dejar independizarte así de fácil, y se va a aprovechar de tus necesidades para convertirte en un tornillo mas (¿Cuántos años lleva Fonny trabajando en ese supermercado?). Para lograr Independizarte de verdad vas a tener que pelear y va a ser duro y te va a demandar mucha autodisciplina.

(In relation to the problem you have there, I would say that it was to be expected, the system will not let you become independent this easily, and will take advantage of your needs in order to make you into another screw (How many years has Fonny working in that Supermarket?). To achieve Independence you will really have to fight and it will be hard and it will demand a lot of self-discipline).

This is a profound analysis that reveals a lot about the beliefs that motivated Cordero to do so much incredible work throughout her life. Cordero told Pawiche, of course you are having trouble—the system is not going to let you gain independence that easily. It was especially clever for her to articulate that the system reproduced itself by taking advantage of people's needs. She reiterated that the path towards independence consisted of hard work and discipline.

The end of the letter highlights Cordero's leadership style, and certain aspects of her personality:

No me atrevo aconsejarte, ni me has pedido consejos...Obiamente hay factores que desconosco y solo tu puedes decidir lo que mejor te conviene. Lo único que te diría es que trates de analizar y planificar lo mas científicamente posible para poder lograr tus propósitos. Estamos de acuerdo con lo que decidas.

(I dare not advise you, nor have you asked me for advice...obviously there are factors that I do not know and only you can decide what is best for you. The only thing I would say is that you try to analyze and plan as scientifically as possible to achieve your purposes. We agree with what you decide).

Cordero did not want to tell Pawiche what to do, she wanted to give him the tools that would allow him to strategically make decisions for himself. This was a major principle for the Proyecto as well. Early members of the Proyecto did not go into communities with a plan of how

the revolution should proceed. They wanted to give people tools, such as the scientific method of organizing, and let them decide the direction of the revolution. In the *San Juan Star* profile of the Proyecto in 1968, it was put in the following way: “The group says their methods, whether violent or non-violent, will depend on what the people decide. They left no doubt, however, that if the “people” decide on an armed revolution then armed revolution it is.”⁷⁹

Cordero ends her letter to Pawiche very tenderly, and with wise words for someone who was struggling as a migrant in New York City:

No debes sentirte mal, como que fracasastes, si tienes que regresar. Uno nunca pierde por tratar algo, todo lo contrario, siempre se aprende de las experiencias positivas y negativas si se evalúan y analizan.

Te queremos mucho y estamos en tu esquina.

(You should not feel bad, like you failed, if you have to return. You never lose by trying something, on the contrary, you always learn from positive and negative experiences if they are evaluated and analyzed.

We love you very much and we are in your corner).

Cordero told Pawiche that returning to Puerto Rico would not mean that he was a failure. This is a meaningful comment given the amount of structural challenges commonly faced by Puerto Rican migrants to the United States. Cordero’s emphasis on evaluating and analyzing all situations meant that she found ways to draw lessons from even the most negative experiences. Cordero ended the letter with an expression of love and support that was quite common in her correspondence with the people close to her.

Puerto Rican-Nicaraguan Solidarity

In the 1980s, one of the important solidarity missions that Cordero and Proyecto members worked on was related to solidarity with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Augusto

⁷⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008; “People with Purpose: Revolution,” *San Juan Star*, 1968. MC 824, folder 1.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Sandino was a Nicaraguan revolutionary killed by Anastasio Somoza in 1934. In 1936, Somoza was elected president and ruled the country as a dictator until 1979. The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front, also known as the Sandinistas) defeated Somoza in 1979. The FSLN took their name from Sandino, who was reclaimed as a hero for the movement.⁸⁰ Nicaragua was a multicultural and multiracial society with a distinct history of colonialism in the region. The country was colonized by the English from 1680 to 1787.⁸¹ During this time, there was a mixture of indigenous people, who made up the majority, English people, Black people (including slaves, those who were free, the children of the English, and maroons, including free people and maroons from other parts of the Caribbean).

In 1986, seven years after the Sandinistas took power in Nicaragua, Malcolm Negron, the son of Efrain Negron (one of the first members of the Proyecto), went to Nicaragua with Samuel Aviles, Cordero's partner and another one of the first members of the group. An original member's son going to Nicaragua with another one of the original members is one of example of Proyecto's legacies and intergenerational experiences. This trip was also an example of the Proyecto working with other groups on the island. Malcolm (also known as Tito) and Samuel took the 1986 trip to Nicaragua with the Movimiento Pueblo a Pueblo, an organization that sent Puerto Ricans to Nicaragua to support the movement there.⁸² This organization was affiliated with Roberto Clemente's family and supporters. Roberto Clemente had been a dark-skinned,

⁸⁰ For more on Nicaraguan history, see Edmund Gordon, *Disparate diasporas: Identity and Politics in an African Nicaraguan Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), and Rose J. Spalding, *Capitalists and Revolution in Nicaragua: Opposition and Accommodation, 1979-1993* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

⁸¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁸² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Afro-Puerto Rican baseball player who not only played across the color line in the United States, but also integrated major league baseball as a Puerto Rican. Clemente's political activism did not end there, and in 1972, he was on his way to Nicaragua to deliver aid following an earthquake, when the plane carrying him and the supplies crashed. As a result, the MPP committee continued the solidarity work between Nicaragua and Puerto Rico.

However, as Samuel explained in an analysis of the solidarity trip to Nicaragua with the MPP, although he and Malcolm traveled with the MPP, they did not fully align with them politically.⁸³ The MPP included people who were more traditional independentistas, who supported Puerto Rican independence, but whom Proyecto members such as Samuel and Tito saw as more dependent on authority and not as revolutionary. Eventually, Proyecto members split from the MPP and began taking trips to Niocaragua to provide technical assistance to Sandinistas living in a cooperative in Rio San Juan. In a funding proposal, Cordero wrote,

In 1986, a Puertorican mechanic visited the cooperative "Never Oporta" in Rio San Juan as part of a solidarity brigade. He found that the cooperatives had equipment which was essential for agricultural production which needed repairs and that they had neither the skills nor any tools for the simplest of repairs (not even a screwdriver). He had taken a basic tool kit and proceeded to put his skills to good use, which included repairing a tractor.

On his return, he assumed the responsibility of organizing a small group (4) of voluntary workers with the necessary skills and motivation...Their main objective was to train a nucleus of cooperativistas in basic mechanics and supply them with the necessary tools for a measure of self sufficiency.⁸⁴

However, in addition to providing technical aid to this community, one of the primary goals of these trips was to motivate political conversations between revolutionary Nicaraguans and Puerto Ricans.

⁸³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁸⁴ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The political differences between Proyecto members and members of the MPP that began in Puerto Rico played themselves out in Nicaragua. The MPP organized a second trip in 1987. However, one of the Proyecto members would not make it. Manuel Santos was a Proyecto member who was supposed to travel to Nicaragua in 1987 with the MPP, but right before the trip, his passport was stolen out of Rafael's P.O. Box by the police. Because of this, Santos had to travel to Nicaragua through Miami, so that he could pick up his United States passport at a processing there. However, he fell in the airport and hit his head. Although it is unclear what happened to him, one of the factors that contributed to his unexpected death was that he did not receive medical care for over nine hours.

When Manuel Santos died, Cordero wrote a letter to Rafael analyzing the situation.⁸⁵ On April 6, 1987, she wrote from Vega Baja and she explained that she had been mentally writing to him for several days, but that now she is writing in a rush because it took a long time to prepare a package, as well as a historical analysis on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua that he wanted to send him. She went over the various books she was sending him, which included science books, Spanish books, one that discussed the Caribbean, and a book on the human body that Manela owned but decided to send along. She then shifted to talking about Manuel's death. She wrote,

Sobre lo de Manuel solo te puedo decir que ha sido bien difícil para todos, especialmente porque estamos solos. Todo el mundo ha ayudado y María y Carmín vinieron pero no es lo mismo que si hubieran estado ustedes. Todo está bastante tranquilo en relación a Rafaela y poco a poco nos estamos recuperando. Millo vino y eso me ayudó mucho. Pero hacías mucha falta tú para organizarlo todo. Como podrás ver por las fotos que te mando, el entierro fue un regerete de gente que no se juntaban, faltabas tú para organizarlo.

(About Manuel I can only tell you that it has been very difficult for everyone, especially because we are alone. Everyone has helped and Maria and Carmen came but it is not the same as if you had been. Everything is quite calm in relation to Rafaela and little by little we are recovering. Millo came and that helped me a lot. But you needed to be here to organize everything. As you can see from the photos I send you, the burial was a mess of people who did not come together, you were missing to organize it).

⁸⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.5. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Cordero exhibits vulnerability in this letter to Rafael, and it also represents a switching of roles that took place towards the end of her life. Cordero came to depend on her own son, Rafael, for assistance, and Rafael stepped into leadership positions as a coordinator for solidarity efforts with Nicaragua.

In her letter, Cordero described the investigation they did into Manuel's death in Miami. They were still not clear as to what happened and why Manuel collapsed. Manuel had arrived to the passport office early, and according to Cordero, he collapsed at 9:25am. Cordero quickly gets into medical mode in the letter, writing,

pruebas de toxicología en el hospital supuestamente fueron negativas y tenía fractura y hemorragia cerebral (subdural hematoma)...faltan los estudios microscópicos, nueva toxicología y comparar los resultados de la autopsia de allá con la de acá.

(Toxicology tests at the hospital were supposedly negative and he had a fracture and cerebral hemorrhage (subdural hematoma) ... we are missing the microscopic studies, new toxicology reports and comparing the autopsy results from there with the ones here).

Although she had no idea what had caused the collapse, Cordero continued with her typical, logical analysis:

como dice nuestro pueblo, no hay craneo. La persona que lo vio caer asegura que estaba solo en ese momento en el vestibulo y que se veía bien...es puertorriqueño de Arecibo y por teléfono me suena right true. Había una oficina de unos agentes federales del DEPTU. de Estado allí cerca pero tendríamos entonces que pensar en una conspiración tipo Maravilla y no veo la posible motivación para una acción tan exagerada, claro Miami es el centro de los exiliados pero Manuel no era tan importante.

(As our people say, there is no cranium [sense to this case]. The person who saw him fall claims that he was alone at that moment in the lobby and that he looked good ... he is Puerto Rican from Arecibo and on the phone he sounded "right true." There was an office of some federal agents from the Department of State nearby but then we would have to think about a conspiracy like the one at Cerro Maravilla and I do not see the possible motivation for such an exaggerated action, of course, Miami is the center of the exiles but Manuel was not that important).

Part of the conflict that Proyecto members had with the MPP is that they did not believe

Manuel's death was part of a conspiracy, and they felt the MPP was trying to make a martyr of

Manuel. Although Cordero acknowledged that Miami was the center of the Cuban exiles who had conservative tendencies, she did not consider Manuel as a target.

Cordero went on to explain that part of the reason that Manuel died was because of the neglect he faced. It took them 30 hours to find him, and she concluded that if it was a political conspiracy, the hospital would have had to be involved as well. However, Cordero did believe that it was a case of medical neglect. In the rest of the letter, Cordero lamented about the fact that no one traveled with Manuel, and that she was not there to offer medical care. She explained that if something had happened to him in Nicaragua, it would have been less sad since the group knew the risk they were taking y traveling there. The only comfort was shared by Rafaela, Manuel's widow: "murio haciendo lo que queria hacer y al morir asi le dio sentido a su vida" (he died doing what he wanted to do and dying in that way gave meaning to his life).

While all of this was happening with Manuel in the spring of 1987, Rafael was living in Nicaragua, studying at CIERA, the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria (Center for Investigations and Studies of Agrarian Reform). Eventually, the Proyecto members decided to create their own brigade, and they named it the Manuel Santos Brigade, after their comrade who had died on his way to the Central American country.

Meanwhile, Cordero was taking steps to raise money for future trips of the Manuel Santos brigade to Nicaragua. In a document she wrote entitled, "Proposal for Financial Sponsorship of Technical Aid to Agricultural Cooperatives in Nicaragua," Cordero articulated the need for the brigade, and why the Proyecto members were the right people to do this work with these communities in Nicaragua. She wrote,

A small group of Puertorican skilled mechanics, trained in the techniques of popular education, volunteered to work for the cooperatives of Rio San Juan, Nicaragua, for a two month period during March – April 1987...

Their work during two months March-April 1987, was surprisingly effective. Their working class composition and culture facilitated their integration into the life of the cooperativistas and allowed them to teach utilizing the principles of the pedagogy of liberation. They also worked very hard motivated by the death of Manuel and as a tribute to his loss.⁸⁶

The working class background of the Proyecto members who took the trip to Nicaragua allowed them to connect with the working class Sandinistas living in a cooperative in the souther part of Nicaragua. In her proposal, Cordero pointed out that an important agricultural union in Nicaragua supported the work of the Manuel Santos brigade, and desired that they continue to visit the community:

The UNAG (Union Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos), a voluntary nongovernment organization which represents the cooperatives, has requested that they return before the end of the year and financial help is being requested for this purpose.⁸⁷

Cordero further justified the Manuel Santos brigade's work in Nicaragua in an addendum to the proposal. In her eyes, the work was important for several reasons. One of the reasons was that the work was happening in a very critical part of the country. The brigade was working in the Rio San Juan department, and this was a part of the country that the government was targeting as a site of development projects, given that it was one of the most underdeveloped parts of the Nicaragua. In addition, this part of the country had also been subject to contra attacks which had taken place in 1981 and 1982, and also in 1987. This community, called Never Oporta, also had a cooperative union that was a collaboration between five unions, and it was a part of the country that had seen the recent resettlement of campesinos who were also recently literate.

For the government, and for Cordero, this initiative could "be useful as a pilot for the rest of the country." Cordero used the word pilot yet again, a word she had used for initiatives in

⁸⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁸⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Ghana, Puerto Rico, and now Nicaragua. A pilot is a test run, but it is also about learning and refining while doing. Pilots encourage people to begin the work before everything is ready and settled, using evaluation processes to improve the work along the way. Interestingly, this experimental and courageous approach is how airplanes were developed, and it feels like more than a coincidence that Cordero's youngest son, Emiliano, would eventually become a passenger aircraft pilot.

In her addendum to the proposal, Cordero makes an extremely adept connection. She wrote, "U.S. bases in Puerto Rico are at the center of plans for aggression in Central America."⁸⁸ For Cordero, this was one of the reasons that solidarity between Puerto Ricans and Nicaraguans was so important. The United States was using an oppressed people to try and oppress another group of people. Stopping the collaboration of Puerto Ricans, would not only be a form of resistance to the United States, but it would help Nicaragua. Cordero explained, "our young men would be used in any direct intervention." Not only did she acknowledge that Puerto Ricans would be used in an intervention in Nicaragua, she acknowledged that their recruitment would be prioritized.⁸⁹ Therefore, Cordero concludes, "any meaningful work for peace and justice in the Caribbean must focus on Puerto Rico."⁹⁰ That is, if Puerto Rico was not included in the liberation struggle, Puerto Rico itself will be a source of oppression in the region. "Puerto Rico is also a possession of the U.S. with severe social problems" she explained, but because of its status, she pointed out that "we also have been deliberately isolated from the rest of the

⁸⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁸⁹ This resonates with the way Puerto Ricans were recruited to fight in the Vietnam War.

⁹⁰ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Caribbean.”⁹¹ The unity of Nicaragua and Puerto Rico that the Proyecto’s work made possible is a story of solidarity between two countries that should be considered integral parts of the Caribbean region. Cordero knew that this political work would have a deep impact on the Puerto Rican participants: “The involvement of working class communities...would have a major impact on their potential for human and community development.”⁹²

Throughout the course of the work in Nicaragua, the Proyecto continued to use the popular education methods they had developed in the 1960s and 1970s. As the brigade did their work, they also developed cultural products, such as the Cancion brigadista.⁹³ There is a line in the song, “Yo quiero cruzar el mar, / y llegar a Nicaragua” (I want to cross the sea, and arrive in Nicaragua). Members of the Manuel Santos Brigade spoke about crossing a sea, not towards Africa, but towards Nicaragua, representing the Proyecto’s turning towards Latin America during this period. There is scholarship that has covered solidarity with Nicaragua during the Sandinista period in the 1980s, but there is not much scholarship that looks at the role played by Puerto Ricans in Nicaragua.⁹⁴ For Puerto Rico, this is an important moment of Latin American solidarity, a way to prove itself as a part of Latin American.

The song continues, and is translated by the Brigade into English. However, there are major differences between the two versions. In the Spanish version, the song talks about the “pueblo puertorriqueño” (the Puerto Rican people) bringing love and solidarity to Nicaragua. In

⁹¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹² Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹³ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁴ See Juliet Hooker, *Race and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

the English version, the Puerto Rican people are replaced with “the peoples of the world.” In addition, in the Spanish version, the song includes a line about carrying a gun (“llevo un fusil”) on behalf of a beloved America, while the English version has a line that describes building solidarity for just Nicaragua. The Spanish version of the song was more militant and expansive.⁹⁵

The Manuel Santos Brigade used sociodramas extensively in their work in Nicaragua. In a packet on sociodramas that they prepared for use in the Central America, they include a very clear and complete explanation of what sociodramas are.⁹⁶ Sociodramas were meant to be “sencilla y clara” (simple and clear), and their purpose was to help people understand society, the behavior of people, and the conflicts that are behind this reality. They help people understand why certain things happen and how they change. They also offer actions that the people can take, and what their possible outcomes are. The packet also explained, “Ademas se dramatiza la actitud y el comportamiento de personajes como los terratenientes que el pueblo no conoce personalmente, aunque son parte de su realidad” (It also dramatizes the attitude and behavior of characters such as landowners that the people do not know personally, although they are part of their reality). In sum, “el sociodrama le devuelve al pueblo su propia realidad desnuda y analizada para que pueda ponerse en control de ella y cambiarla” (the sociodrama returns to the people their own reality, naked and analyzed, so that they can regain control of reality and change it). In this way, the Brigade brought a method that they had used successfully for decades in Puerto Rico to Nicaragua.

⁹⁵ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁶ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, E.32. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The packet continued its description of sociodramas, explaining that characters are stereotypes, anyone can do it, it's spontaneous, and can take place anywhere. They take place with ten to twelve people, and everyone has a role. Afterwards, an evaluation and discussion happens in small groups of five to six people: "Después de cada escena se debe discutir y analizar lo que se vio. Además de resumir la acción, se deben identificar los conflictos y hacer conclusiones sobre ellos" (After each scene you should discuss and analyze what you saw. In addition to summarizing the action, conflicts should be identified and conclusions drawn). The goal was to rely on the expertise of people in the room: "es fácil actuar cuando se está dramatizando la realidad social que uno conoce y ha vivido" (it is easy to act when dramatizing the social reality that one knows and has lived). The packet concludes that the type of intellectual development that sociodramas provided was as important as the technical knowledge that the brigade was bringing to the community: "para lograr el desarrollo económico, la motivación y la conciencia son tan importantes como el adiestramiento técnico" (to achieve economic development, motivation and consciousness are as important as technical training).

The last phase of the Nicaraguan solidarity work was after Hurricane Joan in 1989. Again, the Proyecto worked with more mainstream groups on this initiative including with Vera Clemente, the wife of Roberto Clemente. Other members of the committee, Comité pro víctimas del huracán en Nicaragua (Committee in support of the hurricane victims in Nicaragua), included Inés María Mendoza, the scholar Ricardo Alegria, the former chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico, Jaime Benítez, the actress and politician Velda González, the lawyer Enrique González, the theater director Victoria Espinosa, and the theater scholar and organizer Piri Fernández de Lewis. Rafael stepped into a major leadership position for this committee, since he was one of two coordinators, along with Jose A. Soto.

This committee organized a major concert in Puerto Rico that brought together prominent artists. They raised a substantial amount of money, and in April of 1989, a delegation traveled to Nicaragua to present the donations to President Daniel Ortega. Rafael, Vera Clemente, Inés Mendoza, Ricardo Alegria, Victoria Espinosa wrote a letter to Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega after returning to Puerto Rico:

Fue con un profundo sentido de hermandad hacia el pueblo Nicaragüense que se unieron los diversos sectores de nuestra sociedad en esta acción de solidaridad con las víctimas del huracán Joan. La gentileza de la atención especial y personal de que fue objeto nuestra delegación de parte de la Presidencia se conoció en Puerto Rico y reafirmo los lazos históricos que unen a nuestros pueblos.⁹⁷

(It was with a deep sense of brotherhood towards the Nicaraguan people that the diverse sectors of our society united in this action of solidarity with the victims of Hurricane Joan. The kindness of the special and personal attention that was given to our delegation from the President was made known in Puerto Rico and reaffirmed the historic ties that unite our peoples).

This statement resonates with ones issued by the Haitian solidarity committee, which constantly referenced how various strains within Puerto Rican politics came together to support a common cause. This statement also hints at the fact that there are historic ties between Puerto Rico and Nicaragua that need to continue to be uncovered. As indicated in the statement, the governor of Puerto Rico, Rafael Hernández Colón, in a letter to Vera Clemente, acknowledged the warm welcome the Puerto Rican delegation received in Nicaragua.

Mi muy estimada Vera
Estas letras llevan mi más sincera felicitación por la Orden Eduardo Green, que el Señor Presidente de Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, otorgara a tu querido esposo Roberto Clemente Walker por su ayuda humanitaria al pueblo de Nicaragua cuando el terremoto de 1972—que le costó la vida—y que tu recibiste en su nombre...
Me imagino también que sabías que Roberto estaba presente, en el misterio de Dios que hace presencia la ausencia, porque la fuerza del amor nunca se acaba, porque la militancia del amor nunca se cansa.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁸ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

(My very esteemed Vera

These words convey my most sincere congratulations for the Eduardo Green Order, that the President of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, gave to your beloved husband Roberto Clemente Walker for his humanitarian assistance to the people of Nicaragua after the earthquake of 1972 - that cost him his life -and that you received in his name ...

I also imagine that you knew that Roberto was present, in the mysterious way that God makes absence present, because the force of love never ends, because the militancy of love never tires).

Vera Clemente receiving an honor from the president of Nicaragua in 1989, for the humanitarian work that Roberto Clemente did in the early 1970s, is an important moment in the history of solidarity between the two countries. The Proyecto played a role in this moment as well: David Pagán, the Proyecto's resident artist, had painted a portrait of Roberto Clemente that Vera presented to President Ortega. Vera Clemente later wrote to President Ortega about how meaningful the experience was for her:

Estimado Comandante Ortega:

mi regreso a Nicaragua, luego de 16 años, me ha ayudado a reforzar los lazos de amistad y cariño por su pueblo.

Espero que Dios lo ilumine siempre y pueda continuar su gran labor para mejorar las condiciones generales de su país

Deseándote éxito en las próximas elecciones y esperando su visita algún día en Puerto Rico, quedo, cordialmente, Vera C. Clemente.⁹⁹

(Dear Commander Ortega:

my return to Nicaragua, after 16 years, has helped me to strengthen the bonds of friendship and affection for your people.

I hope that God enlightens you always and that can continue your great work to improve the general conditions of your country

Wishing you success in the upcoming elections and waiting for your visit one day in Puerto Rico, I remain, cordially, Vera C. Clemente).

Vera Clemente wished Ortega luck in the upcoming elections, but in 1990, the Sandinista party lost and peacefully handed over their power, ending a decade-long reign.

In 1990, Cordero and Rafael traveled alone to Nicaragua. By this time, Cordero was quite sick, and Rafael was unsure that she would make it back to Puerto Rico alive. Still, Cordero spent hours talking to Sandinistas about their revolution and their processes, her analytical mind

⁹⁹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

working until the very end, trying to understand why they had set up their government the way they had, and why they had lost the elections.¹⁰⁰ The stamp marking her entry into Nicaragua was the only one in her last passport, which was issued in Miami in 1990.¹⁰¹ Cordero's death was marked by a synchronicity as uncanny as the day of her birth. Her passport was set to expire on February 21, 2000. Cordero passed away on February 21, 1992.¹⁰² Even in this small detail, Cordero's archive seems to be communicating to us that her legacy lives on, and will continue to live on, far beyond the bounds of her physical body's presence on this earth.

¹⁰⁰ There are several cassette recordings of these conversations in Rafael's possession.

¹⁰¹ Ana Livia Cordero Papers, 1933-2008. MC 824, 9.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁰² To add to the coincidence, Malcolm X was assassinated on February 21, 1965, and Augusto Sandino was assassinated on February 21, 1934.

Epilogue

While conducting research in Puerto Rico in 2013, several people told me I had to go visit Maria, a former Proyecto member who lives in Orlando. They told me she would be an important resource because she was one of Cordero's good friends. Maria had begun as a member of the Proyecto, but when she and her partner Vitín migrated to the south Bronx in the 1980s, Cordero took care of their daughter Manela, and they became even closer than before.

My own parents moved to Orlando in 2012. They are part of a wave of Latinxs that are remaking the New South. My parents originally migrated to New York City from the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and the 1970s, but like many other Latinxs from the northeast, they have made the decision to move down south, where prices are cheaper. My parents had always wanted to move back to the Dominican Republic, but because of increasing violence there, they moved to Orlando instead, where some of our other relatives had already resettled. For my mother, it is the next best thing to the Caribbean, since the warmer climate means she can grow many of the plants she would have grown in her homeland. In January of 2014, while visiting my parents in Orlando, I called Maria. I found out that she lived within minutes of my parents, in a house I had driven by with my mother dozens of times. She and her husband were also a part of the developing New South, having previously lived in the Bronx for decades.

When I arrived at Maria's home, I was struck by how much she resembled a typical, older Latinx woman. She wore a housedress, had prepared a meal for me, and a Spanish-language channel was on in the background. But when I followed her into her study for the interview, I began to see signs of her leftist political views. She had portraits of Ramón Emeterio Betances, Malcolm X, and Nelson Mandela in her hallway, and in her study was a portrait of the main character in the *Manela* comic book, drawn by her friend and former Proyecto member,

David Pagán. During our interview, she pulled out many Proyecto documents, as well as her correspondence with Cordero. Just like that, I had found traces of Cordero right in my own community.

At around the same time as this interview, I was reading Alice Walker's essay about her quest to find traces of Zora Neale Hurston in Eatonville, Florida (including her unmarked grave).¹⁰³ I was struck by poignant similarities between Walker's process and mine. As I thought about feminist research praxis, and the physical labor needed to reconstruct and reinsert the narratives of women of color, I also realized that Eatonville, Orlando, and Sanford, where Trayvon Martin was murdered, are within minutes of each other. The new south is not very new at all. Racism and the violence that upholds it endures. It is a land that held Zora and Trayvon, and now holds Puerto Ricans leaving an island burdened with a \$72 billion debt that activists are calling illegal. It is also a land that held the victims of the 2016 shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, many of whom were Puerto Rican. In a way, I have ended up where I started—in a community where I would like to see more solidarity between Black and Latinx communities subject to racist, classist, and homophobic violence. This time, I have the tools and perspectives that Cordero developed at my disposal.

A Global Vision offers several important conclusions. Puerto Rico has been and continues to be a site of consciousness-raising but also of extreme repression. It is an island where the discontents of United States imperial experimentation manifest early and often, and as such, events there should serve as a warning to activists in the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Third World. Cordero knew that Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans had something to teach the world, and she should be recognized as a key figure in the strengthening of

¹⁰³ Alice Walker, "Looking for Zora," in *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983)

transnational, leftist bonds. She strengthened these bonds throughout her entire life, oftentimes doing the long-term work on the ground that is not glamorous and goes unrecognized.

Puerto Rico did not always fit neatly into established categories, but this did not stop Puerto Ricans such as Cordero from resisting and negotiating their imperial relationship with the United States. Puerto Rican resistance histories are diverse and at times contradictory, due to the strategic ways activists have had to balance short and long-term goals under the control of the twentieth century's most powerful empire. Puerto Rican women especially found creative ways to not only challenge their oppression, but thrive, and Cordero's story should motivate scholars to continue looking for examples of Latinx, Latin American, and Spanish-speaking women who contributed to Third World liberation struggles during the Cold War.

Cordero's vision and practice offered another way to organize and move through the world during an era of polarization. She was a brilliant leader and intellectual, but she also had a capacious heart. Cordero could have lived simply and comfortably as a physician with a degree from an elite university. Instead, she dedicated her life to healing and liberation, drawing from an internal source of power that still reverberates today.

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