

cannot “escape” to the safety of their parental homes on a daily or even weekly basis. Here, everyday interactions can highlight differences between students, particularly first-generation college students and the larger student body. As one student at the liberal arts college I studied said: “My suitemates were okay. Most of them were white and they talked about things that I couldn’t connect with. Like, they talked about their vacations and I had nothing to add. My family didn’t go on vacations.”

The experiences of Latino student respondents show that *how* campuses integrate underrepresented students through cultural center programming, counseling services, and/or ethnic peer networks is incredibly important.

Although the outcomes of the Fall 2015 student protests are still evolving, we know that administrators have resigned at University of Missouri and Claremont McKenna College, and Ithaca College’s President Tom Rochon announced his early retirement. Georgetown University and the University of Maryland have both renamed buildings that previously memorialized historical figures implicated in slavery. Several other schools, including Yale University, Harvard Law School, and Princeton University, are similarly considering changing building names. Even the *New York Times* weighed in, recently endorsed removing Woodrow Wilson’s name from a building at Princeton University. Brown University has pledged \$100 million to tackle issues of diversity in

several ways, including creating a center for first-generation college students and hiring more faculty of color.

What all these developments make clear is that the student activists have changed the conversation and the concerns of students of color are now in the national spotlight.



¿Un movimiento Latino en la Florida Central? by Ariana J. Valle

“En el sur de Estados Unidos los blancos tienen el control, [pero] están cagaos por que están perdiendo el control que han tenido durante muchos años. Y quien le va quitar ese control vamos hacer los Latinos. Y van a tratar de dividirnos, y van a tratar de ponernos a pelear. Y hay que hablar con los compañeros y con los amigos Colombianos y Venezolanos, que no sean ellos la cuña de la división.”¹⁶

-- Javier, Puerto Rican resident of Orlando, FL

¹⁶ Translation: “Whites are in control in the southern United States, but they’re freaking out because they are losing the control they’ve had for so many years. And Latinos will be the ones to take control away from them. And they will try to divide us, and they

will try to create in fighting among us. And we need to talk to our Colombian and Venezuelan partners and friends, so that they are not used as the wedge that divides us.”

In the latter part of the 20th century, Florida emerged as the new mainland destination for island and mainland Puerto Ricans. In fact, Florida is now home to the second largest concentration of Puerto Ricans stateside (1,006,542), and in particular, Central Florida is attracting more Puerto Ricans (506,955) than any other region (ACS 2014). Nevertheless, other Latino groups have also undergone significant growth in Central Florida, most notably, Mexicans (274,641), Cubans (162,304), Dominicans (75,056), and Colombians (66,033) (ACS 2014)¹⁷, resulting in a diverse Latino population.



As the Puerto Rican and Latino community have grown, a movement for recognition, respect, representation, and access to political and economic institutions has also developed. However, “unity” between Latinos has not occurred naturally and without fissures. While many respondents in my research noted the cultural, linguistic, and historical bonds

that link Latinos of various national-origins— in fact, the majority of my respondents identified as Puerto Rican and Latino/Hispanic—there were also notable challenges to creating a panethnic movement.

In a setting with limited financial and institutional resources, a nascent organizational infrastructure, and where community members are essentially driving demand for change, access to space, leadership opportunities, and a place at the “agenda setting table” become major issues that often fall along the lines of national-origin. Further, competing perspectives on who should be at the forefront of the movement: a Puerto Rican, a Nuyorican, a South American, an outside (New York) organization, or a local organization? Which issues should be emphasized: Puerto Rico and the economic crisis in the island, those affecting the Puerto Rican diaspora in the mainland, immigration and access to legalization, or the overall exclusion of Puerto Ricans and Latinos from institutions of power and positions of authority? Which strategies should be deployed: adapt to Southern style Florida politics, deploy the more “aggressive” New York/Chicago tactics, follow the more “diplomatic” Puerto Rico approach of engaging with the US, or join with mainstream (White) leaders hoping they will eventually allow Latinos to move up into leadership positions? These

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B03001 for Brevard,

Orange, Hillsborough, Orange, Osceola, Pinellas, Polk, and Seminole Counties.

issues do not include external challenges to creating a movement, mainly, efforts to suppress Puerto Ricans' and Latinos' political participation and to divide the "Latino" community/vote.



Even though organizing is at its early stages and unity remains fragile, on-the-ground there is hope for a movement as Puerto Ricans and other Latinos endure similar struggles: many enter low-end service sector occupations, several lack English language proficiency, and members of both communities are often subjected to derogatory remarks in public spaces. Further, they lack representation in local political institutions, many must learn to navigate a new political system and a distinct racial landscape, and in general, Latinos (despite legal status and national-origin) are perceived as outsiders and foreign.

Thus, should the conversation in Central Florida focus on looking beyond the uniqueness and complexities of the various Latin American and Caribbean groups in order to capitalize on the magnitude of the Latino population and create a united movement? Is it possible to come together as a cohesive group

despite divergent experiences and issues stemming from differences in national-origin, legal status, generation, class, gender, and phenotype? What are the implications of recognizing our heterogeneity and opting for mobilizing as isolated groups? The direction this conversation takes, and the type of movement that solidifies, are especially salient in this moment as we approach the presidential elections. And, as the discourse (particularly in the media and at the organizational level) emphasizes the impact Latinos and Puerto Ricans will have in swaying Florida's political inclination, and as such, directly impacting the future of the nation.

