

Education, under the guise of colonialism, functions as a key to consciousness and freedom. In the case of Puerto Rico, the islands' socio-economic and political development is chained to the United States by its commonwealth status. In 2016 the implementation of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) catalyzed a monopoly of the education system by equating its existence to the will of private profit. The law implemented the Fiscal Oversight Board for Puerto Rico, otherwise known as *La Junta*¹ to locals, to manage the island's boastful \$72 billion debt in conjunction with the Puerto Rico Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority and promote risk management in the education system with Julia Kehler as the Secretary of Education (Wessel, 2022). Rises in foreign investment magnified post-Maria on the island inflated the presence in the U.S. dominion, especially in the education sector. Under this authority, former Secretary of Education Julia Keleher closed 428 public schools while creating an Education Reform Act Bill to redefine the educational future of Puerto Ricans (Rubiano Yedidia et al., 2020). Notwithstanding, after being arrested for fraud by embezzling money from education reform, schools remained shut down, sold to limited liability companies (LLCs) and students were forced out of the island in the current education crisis (Virella, 2022, 96). Puerto Ricans' accessibility to education ceased to be a fundamental right.

Colonialism has created a blueprint of destruction and loss in Puerto Rico's education system. Investigating Puerto Rico's colonial status affirms the ubiquitous nature of the island's limited autonomy. By proxy understanding the landscape of education, specifically its in-accessibility, unmask a veil of submission. Scholars, like Puerto Rican Rocio Zambrana, have worked to argue that Puerto Rico remains a colony and not a commonwealth of the United States, in their book *Colonial Debts (2021)*, since the implementation of U.S. policies created a

¹ *La Junta* is a term used by Boricuas to generalize the militarizing impact the fiscal Board has had on the island. In addition, the term *La Junta* facilitate conversation on contradicting governing forces prevalent on the island.

system of predation to monetize funds from the island's subordination. A scaffolding of capturing value links to a nebula of physical and symbolic debt. For Boricuas² on the island and of the diaspora, the concept of colonialism has been debated considering it opens avenues of reparations, social loss, and political divide. By interviewing various Puerto Rican education stakeholders, my project aims to critically analyze and decipher the current education reform and rise of privatization on the island as a consequence of neoliberal dynamics that come as a direct result of the US colonial status that has chained Puerto Rico's past, present and future.

² A term which translated to Puerto Rican based on the Indigenous Taino Language.

References

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