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# The migration and culture of Puerto Ricans: art as a method for resistance\*

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## ABSTRACT

The initiative to investigate the themes of migration, art and culture in this research arose from our experiences after Hurricane Maria. We begin with the view that culture, in the form of art etc., is threaded through the entire post-hurricane experience, from response and resilience to recovery and resistance. We wish to consider how our research contributes to an understanding of how the migration of Puerto Ricans after the catastrophe might accelerate the process of cultural change. We do this by exploring how art and culture are used as a mechanism of resistance. Our desire to conduct research on this topic developed as a result of our firsthand experiences and reflections. First, the theme of migration, linked to cultural change, arose from our experience of seeing our close relatives such as our siblings, uncles, cousins, leave our island and see how they had to adapt to a new culture and redefine their cultural practices. Second, the theme of art, in all its facets (music, painting, drawing ...), arose from our motivation after Hurricane Maria, from our way of coping with the situation and letting our feelings come out through art, thus demonstrating a resistance to not falling into a decline in both physical and mental health and a persistence for wanting to overcome the disaster despite the situation. Puerto Rican culture is one of the most important components of our society, as it defines our identity as Puerto Ricans for many reasons such as our music, food and dancing. This allows us to share as a community. Also, we recognise that in Puerto Rico, awareness and acknowledgement of culture has faded to some extent; only on "Puerto Rican Day" is when our culture and traditions are noticed. This is confirmed by the responses of the respondents in our research study. This is why we decided to investigate how important culture is for Puerto Rican migrants and family and friends who remained and what it means to them.

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## Introduction

On September 20, 2017, our island was impacted by Hurricane Maria, something that has affected us socially, structurally and emotionally, but at the same time, made us put our differences aside and come together to overcome the disaster. At this moment we became one, even though we believe in different political and religious ideals, our principle ideal at this moment was resistance, fight for our country and make our island better again, something that describes us as Puerto Ricans, being recognised by fighting for our country.

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\*In honor of our family who left the Island.

Looking at the case of Puerto Rico, we can deduce that Puerto Rico is inhabited by a complexity of cultures that identifies us as Puerto Ricans. Culture is one of the most important components for a society, as it defines the identity of many and is one of the essential methods to unify the community, i.e. the expression of culture, whether through music, gastronomy, dances, painting, and literature in prose or poetry. Puerto Ricans commonly exhibit a strong link to culture and pride in it. For example, the formation of the famous “Team Rubio”<sup>1</sup> for the period when the Puerto Rican baseball team went to the World Baseball Classic in 2017.

The questions posed in this research are the following: How does cultural identity change with migration? What cultural impact does migration have on communities and people who remain in Puerto Rico? What impact does it have on those who migrate?

Migration is one of the most significant phenomena accelerating cultural change, as people who leave the island sometimes are confronted with others in their new place of residence. However, it is important to emphasise the role that natural disasters and poverty play in the phenomenon of migration. After Hurricane Maria, a significant number of Puerto Ricans were forced to leave the island in order to survive.

For our research, we want to consider Puerto Rican culture and explore the ability of art<sup>2</sup> as a cultural expression to function as a method of resistance<sup>3</sup> for Puerto Ricans. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, people used art as an-escape from problems and to keep themselves distracted and resist colonisation. Local artists could be observed doing artwork on walls and roads, writing songs, dancing and singing, among other things. In this way they resisted negative thoughts and emotions. It is clear that art is important for culture, but how much does it define us as Puerto Ricans? How much does it help us preserve our culture?

## Literature review

The literature review examined the following reading: The article “Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and Latcrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context” (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Our main premise is that culture, in the form of art etc., is threaded through the experience of response, recovery, resilience, and resistance.

Solorzano and Bernal (2001) use qualitative research methods and storytelling to examine the construct of resistance, the potential for transformation, and its external and internal dimensions among students of Mexican descent living in the United States, known as Chicanos and Chicanas. The study was based on two important events among these students: the East Los Angeles High School strikes in 1968 and the UCLA student strike for the inclusion of Chicana and Chicano Studies as an academic discipline in 1993.

The article by Solorzano and Bernal (2001) is based on the construct of resistance, which refers to strategies of behaviour meant to oppose oppressive circumstances and validate the value of the oppressed group. Hurtado and Cadwell expand on this by mentioning:

To fully understand Chicanas[os]’ resistance, it is necessary to view their strategies within the context of their oppression-resistance under this frame gains its full significance and non-resistance also becomes much more understandable. (Hurtado, 1996, p. 48, cited in Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 334)

Resistance can take the form of momentous acts of organised, planned, and disciplined protests, or it may consist of small, everyday actions, seeming insignificant that can nevertheless validate the actor’s sense of dignity and worth. (Caldwell, 1995, p. 276, cited in Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 334)

Emphasising what is noted by Solorzano and Bernal (2001), Aida Hurtado and Paulette Caldwell inspired us to study the multiple strategies that students use to achieve resistance and challenge the status quo. The article mentions several of the multiple strategies used by Chicana and Chicano students. They also mention that the resistance of these students must be examined on the basis of an intersection that includes those linguistic rights, cultural rights and the influence of the students’ migration status. This shows that there must be a centrality of

experiential knowledge in order to know and study resistance. Because of this, the article, when also discussing students of colour, mentioned that “when using a storytelling framework and LatCrit it should be noted that stories and storytelling are legitimate methodologies and are appropriate for analysing these students’ educational experiences” (Solorzano & Bernal 2001, p. 335). This is because students of colour are constantly working through internal and external transformation strategies, because they are on the margins, which mostly refers to deprivation or domination. They also engage in transformational resistance, because they fight for the oppressive situation to change and improve.

It should be noted that there are different types of resistance mentioned in Solorzano and Bernal (2001):

1. Reactionary behaviour – This type is not so much a form of resistance, although the reading places it as resistance. It is rather that attitude of defence that is associated with misbehaviour, i.e. reacting or acting in a defensive or aggressive manner towards something or someone simply because of the fact that the student’s or individual’s behaviour is so (p. 317).
2. Self-defeating resistance – where the individual recognises his or her oppressive conditions, but acts in a counterproductive and non-transformative way. That is, their actions tend to recreate or reinforce their oppressed state to reproduce rather than transform structures of oppression (p. 317).
3. Conformist resistance – This is the individual’s desire to struggle to improve conditions, but not to demand change from the oppressive system, but for change to come from the people as a society, implementing change themselves without involving the system. For them, the system does not need change (p. 318).
4. Transformational resistance – This is resistance based on action and change. The individual knows his or her oppressive conditions. He/she knows what needs to change and fights for that social change to occur in his/her oppressive conditions (p. 319).
5. Resilient Resistance – is a combination of conformist resilience and transformational resilience as it focuses on the individual moving forward regardless of the oppressive conditions to which they are exposed (p. 320).
6. Resistance for liberation – The individual’s demand for change to occur in the environment that oppresses them (p. 320).

Linking our research to this article, each participant interviewed has a different way of expressing resistance. It is worth noting that resistance occurs for the same purpose: to face adversity to move forward, even if it occurs through different strategies. By knowing more about the construct of resistance, we can understand the feelings of our interviewees and go deeper with each of them and find their core of resistance, i.e. find their personal resistance strategies. Thus, we can also see how culture and resistance are integrated, and how our interviewees created resistance after Hurricane Maria.

Similarly, knowing the different types of resistance, it can be seen that the summer of 2019 was a form of transformational resistance. The way in which we fought to remove the then governor, Ricardo Rosello, was a struggle of resistance that brought change. As a people, we saw that oppressive entity, we acted, and we achieved our goal. As a culture, we added a historic event to our history of cultural resistance.

The Indigenous people, Tainos who lived in these lands had, among other things, their lives, land and language taken away from them in order to civilise them. Then, with the American invasion, they tried to do something similar, but there was some resistance. The U.S. federal government wanted to implement the English language, but it didn’t work. There are still many Puerto Ricans who don’t know any English. Not knowing English is like a form of resistance to the threat of cultural assimilation. In any case, the U.S. government had and still has control of Puerto Rico, since we are their colony.

With the reading as a basis for analysis, we were able to interpret the data, develop and better explain our research topic. Both readings allow us to have a concrete definition of the constructs we use in our research. Finally, knowing that there is information and interested people dedicated to topics such as our research, motivates us to continue developing it and also to continue learning about this topic.

## **Methodology**

Our research stems from a preliminary analysis of our own experience and how we handled the situation after Hurricane Maria. Taking these factors into consideration, we opted for participatory action research that includes autoethnographic personal data. Much of these data come from our own observations and field notes during field visits. We also chose to include in our research design a few more participants who were fellow university students and who shared similar experiences during the natural disaster and how they chose to withstand the difficult times. The participants we interviewed were university students like ourselves between 19 and 22 years old (three women and one man, Julia, Marta, Estela, Lucas). Julia was a student at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico in Ponce (PUCPR), and the other three were students at the University of Puerto Rico in Cayey (UPRC), which is the university institution of the authors of this research. We chose to interview a participant from outside our institution to gain other perspectives on academic situations in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

The interviews were conducted at the respective universities of each participant. That is, three were conducted at UPRC and one at PUCPR. Based on our field visits, we visited the municipalities of Cayey and Carolina in search of art created during the Hurricane Maria recovery process. In addition, we chose to use social networks to collect images and artistic expressions of Puerto Ricans in the face of adversity. This process continued throughout the research, but we focussed on the site visits and field notes over the months of June, July and August 2019, even though we conducted interviews during the month of September 2019 as well.

The objectives of our project were linked to culture and the different ways in which it is encountered and manifested. The aim was to find out how people use art and culture as methods of resistance in the face of adversity. First of all, it was necessary to answer: What is culture? We wanted to understand what people understand by this concept and we were also interested in learning how culture has changed in the lives of individuals who left Puerto Rico. Remembering how devastating Hurricane Maria was, it is important to highlight the number of people who had to move out of Puerto Rico to survive, due to the destruction and loss of their belongings. It is therefore worth investigating what role migration plays in this process of cultural change.

As a fundamental part of this data collection, the extensive use of our field notes was one of the mechanisms we relied upon, because the notes relate our own observations and experiences, which, after all, were the reason for conducting this research. In addition, the notes are a compilation of what we were able to observe from other people, other communities and how they, like us, used culture for different reasons. Interviews were also used, and these were an important source of information in our research as they served to explore the topic further, to get to know other perspectives and experiences different from our own. They allowed us to go in depth with the narratives of our participants where they had the space to share any thoughts and/or experiences after Hurricane Maria. In addition, we used this research strategy to learn what culture is for them, how they interpret and use it, and specifically how they use it to resist difficult thoughts and moments in their lives, such as the period after Hurricane Maria.

In terms of our research process, our first step was to collect our own experiences and observations through field notes. We then conducted interviews with our respective participants, who were selected on the basis of the criteria noted above. After both data were collected, they were

compiled in an Analysis Matrix,<sup>4</sup> format that focuses on cataloguing the most relevant data for our research. These matrices were then categorised into data about culture, unity and resistance. This created our next method of data collection: Analysis Memos. Finally, with the conclusion of our data collection process, we came to the analysis of the data to obtain the final results and culminate the research project. The principals research questions used were as follows:

1. What relevance did art seem to have in the recovery process after Hurricane Maria?
2. What elements of culture change occurred in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria and what role did migration seem to play in that process?
3. How can art function as a method of resistance and recovery?

### ***Presentation of data***

The main basis of our research is culture and art, therefore, we developed three key categories from our matrices to organise and analyse relevant information: culture, unity, and resistance.

For the “culture” category, three considerable pieces of data best support our research as examples that illustrate our main findings. First, one of the authors, realisation about Casa Pueblo<sup>5</sup> is a telling example of what other participants also felt about the relevance of culture after the class field trip to Casa Pueblo:

In Adjuntas, Puerto Rico, Casa Pueblo has fought to maintain our cultural heritage, showing its importance to the community. How Casa Pueblo has advanced technologically by using solar energy instead of electricity, and the importance of support among all to preserve part of the cultural history and even be part of it, even in difficult times.

Gabriel's statement demonstrates how his exposure to Casa Pueblo and what they had accomplished yielded new insights about the fluid nature of culture and how it is an important part of every aspect of a society's social and economic life. Gabriel, like the other participants, began to realise that we ourselves continually produce culture, as the society, the community, and the individuals who compose it. We are responsible for writing it, maintaining it, sharing it, fighting for it and showing its importance. Similarly, the fact that “they have advanced technologically” opens us to the perspective that culture, like society, is constantly changing. New technological advances, new social customs, new influences, among other things, cause culture to change, so what culture was in the year 1900 is not the same as what it is now in the year 2021.

As a second piece of data, Marta, a 22-year-old student of the UPR in Cayey, explained: “Although in our country many people and even artists have to deal with their different artistic expressions to preserve our culture, this is not enough”. This fact links with the previous one and also contributes to the “art” area of our research, as it shows that several Puerto Ricans – among them artists – have struggled to preserve specific traditional cultural expressions: typical music, typical dance, gastronomy, art in general, among others. Likewise, no matter how hard we try to recover what our culture was in the past, we will not recover it. What we can do is to adapt to the present with a touch of cultural history. This is because culture is not static, but changes with time and circumstances. Society will always play an important role in culture, i.e. culture will change, because it is conditioned by society and society is constantly changing. Nowadays culture has altered a lot because we are in a technological era, and everything that happens in the world affects us individually and collectively in a certain way.

The third and last piece of data from the “culture” category was obtained from another author “The reason for this wave of migration was that many families left the island to be able to make progress in another country because it was very difficult here after the catastrophe”. This fact brings us to the migration issue. Post-Maria migration was of great magnitude in Puerto Rico, where approximately 184,000 people left the island in just 3 months, reducing the

island's population by 6% (Agencia EFE, 2018). We consider how migration influences cultural change through the adaptation to a new culture. Although people continue with their cultural habits, they must adapt to the new culture they are integrating into, and in the same way, contribute to a change of culture. In the same way, this would happen in Puerto Rico if the case were reversed, if people from other countries migrated to the island, their culture would adapt to ours. Furthermore, as technological advances, changes in cultural habits, migration and other changes, mean that culture changes every day and that what we consider "cultural" both remains a historical fact as well as a set of ongoing customs in our daily lives.

With this information mentioned above, we open the way to the second category: "unity". Participants felt that there is a now a new generational glue that is forging a new aspect of Puerto Rican culture. As the first piece of data from another author shows: "It is important to recognise the distinctions between the generations, as the leaders of the protest were young people, better known as 'La Generacion del Yo No Me Dejo'". This is important for the research as there is a relevant factor: the growing youth in the country. This has been felt since Hurricane Maria, through the "Caribbean Summer" in 2019 to the present day. This generation has a new cultural perspective that highlights the resistance of Puerto Rico, as it is a generation that is fighting for a better Puerto Rico and thereby raising awareness in each of its inhabitants. This does not minimise the struggles that have taken place previously in some sectors, but this one stands out for the magnitude that it managed to attract. That is to say, not since the struggle against the Navy in Vieques have we seen the whole Puerto Rican people fighting for their rights; this time it was the youth who were at the forefront of the struggle. This denotes, on a large scale, a contribution to the cultural history of the island, showing us what Puerto Rican culture itself is, a culture of struggle, perseverance, resilience, and resistance in the face of diverse events over time.

The second piece of information that is representative of the data in the "unity" category is from Julia, a person who works in Casa Pueblo: "... people are united with a fighting spirit in the face of the different situations and conflicts in Puerto Rico". Like the previous data, this provides us with essential information in our research because it gives us a perspective of how Puerto Ricans are now and the nature of our current culture, since it is the Puerto Rican who denotes the culture. This makes us see and understand that a new cultural history is being written on our island since the passage of Hurricane Maria, where the people are more united and committed to making and having a better Puerto Rico. It also makes us understand that no matter what happens, how much migration there is, how many catastrophes occur, how many years pass, our culture will be one of unity, perseverance and resistance.

The above data leads us to the last of the categories: the "resistance" group. Here is the first piece of data from an observational memo based on field notes: "They talked about culture and the importance of fighting for our rights". This quote was taken from field notes about a comment verbalised by another participant who works in Casa Pueblo, While visiting Casa Pueblo, the worker commented on an event that occurred from 1980 to 1995 in Adjuntas, P.R., about how, during those fifteen years, they were fighting against mines that would damage the ecosystem if they were to be built. That struggle adds a lot to our theme of culture and resistance. First, it is a story about preserving what belongs to us. Then, the story shows us the power of resistance and struggle in the face of injustice, how to stop it, and how powerful a united people can be. It makes us see that, from our past until now, Puerto Rican culture has been one of resistance and struggle against events that corrupt the rights of the people and damage the Puerto Rico we all love and respect. As a final highlight of our compilation is from Maria, one of the authors: "We will continue to fight for our rights so that we can have a better country. We are a small island, but we can do great things."

Most of the data we have collected shows us that our culture has been one that has struggled and been resistant through many events. Similarly, the data has shown that art has been a tool for success in each of the struggles, through music, dance, paintings and other

artistic expressions. It has also been a method of resistance to overcome adversity both individually and collectively. Our culture will continue to change, leaving in history what was once denoted as our cultural hallmark, but marking our artistic, fighting, persevering, resistant and resilient culture that has been and will continue to be.

## Conclusions and recommendations

To sum up, culture is a concept that changes with circumstances; it is dynamic. Art, music and resistance are all aspects that can characterise it. Some phenomena that occur today is that people who were born into one culture identify with another. In other words, culture can be taken anywhere. This means that the fact that you are born in a specific place does not primarily define the culture you identify with. For example, if you have Puerto Rican parents and you are born abroad, your parents will teach you their culture, but you will also be interacting with the culture around you, which implies a cultural variant. The purpose of our research was to look at the resistance processes that the people of Puerto Rico employed in the face of disaster and oppressive conditions, and specifically, the ways in which they used elements of culture to channel their emotions. We were able to study how music, poetry and other types of art were used. We observed culture as an element of resistance, for example, in the protests to remove the former governor, Ricardo Rossello, from power.

Furthermore, our research has allowed ideas to emerge about the relationship between migration and Puerto Rican culture and its loss. Given what we've experienced and explored in this research process, we think the following question should be examined in future research projects about the island and its culture: How does migration play a role in cultural change of an individual and/or community? Such research would aim to orient the Puerto Rican population about the various ways in which resistance can be developed through the culture to which they belong and how experiences of migration disrupt that process. This could be done by creating focus groups to allow people to explore the concept of culture and the ways in which it unfolds in the aftermath of a disaster, particularly in the face of migration out of Puerto Rico. Creating an environment where each participant feels comfortable talking about how they overcome their crises. Such a research project would uncover Puerto Rican's own stories to reveal these influences. These focus groups, both remote and local, would facilitate the participation of Puerto Ricans both on and off the island, including those who migrated and those who did not. Another aspect of the research initiative could be to hold some kind of conference aimed at the entire university community of the UPR in Cayey. This would be aimed at people to participate and talk about all their experiences that have to do with culture, resistance, and migration. The conference proceedings could be recorded as data for analysis.

### POEMA CASA PUEBLO

Casa rosada, que de historia vive.  
 Donde su gente alegre convive  
 Mirando la historia que allí dice.  
 Donde estos orgullosos dicen sentirse.  
 Te reciben y te acogen con amor.  
 Mientras el sonido del viento resuena.  
 Y una palabra se eleva,  
 "Lucha", ese es el lema.  
 Mi ser se preocupa por saber  
 Que no todos conocen este eden.  
 Donde cultura se ve  
 Y de gran ayuda es.  
 Solos se han sostenido y a su pueblo han unido.  
 Mas que belleza, una historia han construido.  
 De aquellas que el gobierno oculta.  
 Pero el puertorriqueño siempre cuenta.  
 Asumen que la historia se,



Pero ese día la vine a conocer.  
 Pues de Casa Pueblo poco se habla,  
 Y todos deberíamos promocionarla.  
 Con nuestra visita aprendimos  
 Un poco más de Puerto Rico.  
 Un lugar que nos anima  
 A luchar por nuestra isla.

-Maria del Mar Rivera Colon

Resurgiendo de las cenizas  
 Un ave emigro, una flor se marchito.  
 Un árbol cayo, una casa se destruyo.  
 Solo queda el silencio desde aquel estruendo.  
 Todo parecia un sueño, todos querian que fuera un sueño.  
 Intentando entender todo lo que se podia ver.  
 Buscando algo que comer y agua para beber.  
 Sin saber de la familia y amigos,  
 rogando que nada les haya sucedido.  
 Las horas pasaban sentados en la sala  
 De lo que era una casa que ahora es nada.  
 Uniendose al vecino, al que nunca habian visto.  
 Abriendo caminos para intentar llegar a su destino.  
 Buscan maneras de seguir y tener un mejor por venir.  
 Tratando de olvidar lo sucedido, lo que el huracan Maria  
 habia destruido.  
 Aunque todo se ve por perdido, nunca se dan por vencidos.  
 Todos esperanzados siguen avanzando, algunos esperando un milagro,  
 otros continuan luchando.

Maria del Mar Rivera Colon

### **Reflective memos**

As part of our research, we made Reflective memos of our experiences after Hurricane Maria. Following our research approach of participatory action research, we want to include our Reflective memos as part of it because we consider that if we were part of the Hurricane Maria event, we can talk about it like our interviewees and we can contribute our own experiences to the research.

### **Gabriel Perez Otero**

I never imagined that on 20 September 2017 I would go through the most difficult time of my life. I went to sleep that night without power, thinking ... "This is not going to be that bad, we'll probably go about two weeks without power and then everything will be back to normal". I remember telling myself many months later that I had been incredibly wrong and that those months after Hurricane Maria were devastating. Keeping my mind right was extremely difficult, as I am a person who enjoyed video games and outdoor activities, both of which were limited due to the disaster. I ended up reading and listening to music, which were activities I barely did before the hurricane, as I had never identified with art and often overlooked it. Today I can say that I was missing an important aspect of life, and a very strong one. I was missing the cultural identity.

As I listened to more music and read more stories, novels and poems, I learned to admire the beauty of art through different channels and to appreciate the power that art has over us. Personally, during these difficult times I saw how art became a coping mechanism for many Puerto Ricans, and I can recognise and assume that this is not only in the face of adversity, but adversity definitely intensifies the need for it. In this way, I decided to work with my group on the topic of culture and how important it is to us as Puerto Ricans and the role it played in supporting the community after Hurricane Maria. Furthermore, we recognised the importance of

culture in a general aspect and were curious to investigate how migration has an effect on culture and how it feeds cultural change processes.

Personally, I have never felt less Puerto Rican for being in another country, and I have always maintained strong cultural roots, but I have not been outside Puerto Rico for more than three months. In this work, we wanted to highlight how Puerto Ricans in the diaspora do not vary from Puerto Ricans on the island. I have friends who are part of the diaspora and they live the music and dance like there is no tomorrow, and that reaffirms the importance of culture in a community, even in settings outside the country.

Finally, this research has allowed me to better understand the impact of culture and its importance, but also to notice how culture and art are present in a wide variety of forms and how each person has their own sense of culture and their own feeling of being rooted in their culture. I am beyond excited to continue this journey and to be able to honour and support the importance of culture in an academic setting for others to read and learn about Puerto Rican culture and how powerful it is to our society, and to reinforce that our culture should never be abandoned.

### *Minely Caceres Rivera*

The title of the research is “The Migration and Culture of Puerto Ricans: Art as a Method for Resistance.” This research is part of a larger project implemented by Regina Deil Amen, Julio Cammarota and Gina Perez called “Persistence in the face of adversity: Resilience of UPR students, Cayey”. The part I am most involved in is about how art was a major influence on how people were able to cope with their new reality after Hurricane Maria.

Since the passage of Hurricane Maria, I have witnessed the misfortunes that my people suffered and all the damage it caused in Puerto Rico. I also saw how these people channelled their



Photo by, Gabriel Perez at Cayey, P.R. after Hurricane Maria.



Photo by Gabriel Perez at Cayey, P.R. after Hurricane Maria.



Photo by Maria del Mar Rivera at San Juan, P.R. at a protest after Hurricane Maria.



Photo by Maria del Mar Rivera after Hurricane Maria at the Airport on Carolina, P.R.

emotions and turned them into something more beautiful. I got to see how people started painting the streets, painting walls and I saw my own town covered with so much art like I had never seen before. It was shocking to me. Then I stopped for a second and realised that I too started painting again. All those hand drawing habits were concentrated into painting, painting everything I was feeling. Projecting my own feelings. Maria left traumas, but art was a mechanism that helped us and that we had available in the moments we needed. Without art, I would have been lost. This research allowed me to see how this meant a lot to my culture. I saw how art gets internalised to help people to cope with adversity. Thanks to expressions of art, such as music, dance and painting, among others, many people got through. I also think that the resistance that people took with this new art form helped us to get Governor Ricky Rossello out of power. He gave us a weapon and he also gave us a way to use it. With music, prayer, yoga and dance, we were able to show that it is the people who really have the power and not a corrupt governor. We still have a long way to go, but I am Puerto Rican and I will not give up because that is what my culture taught me: perseverance, bravery, courage. I know that if I set my mind to it, I will achieve something.

To conclude my reflection, I really liked this research. I think it is something that will help me to understand a little more about the resistance that people have. It will also help me understand myself more and realise that Puerto Ricans are not weak people, but quite the opposite. Puerto Rico has gone through so much adversity that it is flourishing again. This process cannot be stopped. It will be constant, just as I will be constant with my convictions.

### *Maria del Mar Rivera*

For some time now, the question of what defines Puerto Rican culture has been in the air. Many mention that it is the music, such as Bomba and Plena, that it is the gastronomy and other

expressions of art, among other things. But is it really this? Culture is a constant social change, but somehow we try to preserve the old, the classic. However, what has happened in our Puerto Rican culture is that culture is maintained in specific times, dates and spaces, and not as a constant preservation in the daily life of every Puerto Rican. This is why our theme focuses on culture and art as a method of resistance.

As a main problem we wanted to investigate to what level the emigration of Puerto Ricans after Hurricane Maria accelerated the process of cultural change and how art was used as a mechanism of resistance. This would show us something clearer to understand culture, how much is known about it, the different perspectives or opinions of different people about it and also to explore whether an event, such as Hurricane Maria, is a trigger for cultural change and how art is a method of resistance. The research process was like a sea of information that we wanted to confirm what we didn't know, but which was a vital source both for the research and for oneself personally.

Collecting data both from literature and from narrated experiences helped us to see culture and art, and to reflect on this in a way that we had not seen and would be of great help to us in our research. This process helped us to learn more about our culture, what affects it, how educated we are about it, how art influences both the culture and the life of each person and also an awakening to continue fighting to preserve it. We know that our research will be of great help to many people, as it was to us, and we hope that in one way or another it will raise questions about our culture so that we can preserve it properly.

## Notes

1. "His triumphs generated an incredible euphoria on the island. The fever was known as the Team Rubio influence and caused thousands of Puerto Ricans to paint their hair blonde following the fashion imposed on the team by catcher Yadier Molina as an action to create unity among all the players of the ninth." (Primera Hora Newspaper (El Nuevo Dia, 2016))
2. "Manifestation of human activity by means of which the real is interpreted or the imagined is expressed with plastic, linguistic or sonorous resources". (Real Academia Española, 2020 (Art, 2016)).
3. "Attitude of the person who opposes doing something, refusing to do it or simply not collaborating". (Gran diccionario de la Lengua Española, 2016 (Resilience, 2016)).
4. A grid which raw excerpted data is places into to create relevant analytical categories.
5. Casa Pueblo is a community based organization located in Adjuntas, Puerto Rico. Their primary mission is to protect the bio-diversity of the local rain forest. In addition, Casa Pueblo advocates for expanding self sustaining solar energy in Adjuntas and throughout Puerto Rico. Their main vehicle for organizing and bringing about change is connecting all of their work with Puerto Rican culture.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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