

Constructing Citizenship through Creative Mediums: An Exploration of Cuba and Puerto Rico

by  
Sara Bennett

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

Honors College

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in Political Science  
(Honors Scholar)

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in International Studies  
(Honors Scholar)

Presented May 24, 2017  
Commencement June 2017



## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Sara Bennett for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in Political Science and Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in International Studies presented on May 24, 2017. Title: Constructing Citizenship through Creative Mediums: An Exploration of Cuba and Puerto Rico:

Abstract approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Amy Below

This paper critically examines the notion of citizenship and how its construction has evolved over time. As the world becomes increasingly more globalized and connected, it becomes even more important to consider forms of citizenship that are transnational and move beyond the traditional borders of the nation-state. This is especially true with regard to immigrants, who must navigate a complex society in which they are often perceived as the ‘other.’ This paper will investigate two islands in the Caribbean that have unique relationships with the United States regarding citizenship: Cuba and Puerto Rico. In the first section, the author reviews literature regarding citizenship and belonging, focusing specifically on the definitions in the United States. The paper then goes on to explore the ways in which lived realities may differ from legal interpretations of the term, investigating a wide range of creative mediums. By including an analysis of these creative mediums, the author is able to broaden the space in which citizenship discussions traditionally take place, hoping to complicate the notion further. It is the goal

of this paper to represent a truth of citizenship that is just as true as the Supreme Court decisions and legal definitions of the word.

Key Words: citizenship, immigration, belonging, Cuba, Puerto Rico

Corresponding e-mail address: [saraybennett@gmail.com](mailto:saraybennett@gmail.com)

©Copyright by Sara Bennett  
May 24, 2017  
All Rights Reserved

Constructing Citizenship through Creative Mediums: An Exploration of Cuba and Puerto Rico

by  
Sara Bennett

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

Honors College

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in Political Science  
(Honors Scholar)

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in International Studies  
(Honors Scholar)

Presented May 24, 2017  
Commencement June 2017

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in Political Science and Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in International Studies project of Sara Bennett presented on May 24, 2017.

APPROVED:

---

Amy Below, Mentor, representing the School of Public Policy

---

Adam Schwartz, Committee Member, representing the School of Language, Culture and Society

---

Christina León, Committee Member, representing the School of Writing, Literature and Film

---

Rebekah Lancelin, Committee Member, representing the International Studies Degree Program

---

Toni Doolen, Dean, Oregon State University Honors College

I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

---

Sara Bennett, Author

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank

my wonderful mentor, Amy Below, for her continued patience, encouragement, and guidance with this project, for reading draft after draft and never failing to give timely feedback, and never failing to put a smile on my face,

Adam Schwartz, Christina León, and Rebekah Lancelin, for taking the time to read over this project and providing much appreciated advice

my family, for their constant love and support,

and my friends, for helping me to keep my wits about me through it all.

Thank you.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.....	4
DEFINING CITIZENSHIP.....	7
U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND THE IMMIGRANT.....	12
POWER AND CITIZENSHIP.....	14
CREATIVE MEDIUMS AND POLITICS.....	15
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	18
ANALYSIS OF CREATIVE MEDIUMS.....	22
DISCUSSION.....	35
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	40
WORKS CITED.....	43
APPENDIX A: WE CAME ALL THE WAY FROM CUBA SO YOU COULD DRESS LIKE THIS?....	48
APPENDIX B: PUERTO RICAN OBITUARY.....	58

## INTRODUCTION

Constructed meanings of citizenship are both diverse and varied and many scholars have investigated what it means to be a citizen of a country and what rights one is afforded (Vink; Rincón and Oboler): "Citizenship has traditionally defined a formal relationship between an individual and the state. Referent to a territorially based political community, citizenship is often tied to nationality" (Rincón and Oboler 134). Is citizenship merely an extension of control of the nation-state, or is it a more complex notion that cannot be discussed without discussing "race, class, and gender (Rincón and Oboler 137)" within the United States? As ideas and conceptions of the nation-state continue to expand and evolve, it becomes increasingly important to reconsider notions that have traditionally been tied to the physical borders of nation-states. Gloria Anzaldúa reconfigures this idea of the 'physical border' and, instead, proposes the idea that "between the contradictions was a place of the untethered possibility" (Anzaldúa). In an increasingly globalized world, with the rise of what Vance Glick Schiller defines as transmigrants as

those persons, who having migrated from one nation-state to another, live their lives across borders, participating simultaneously in social relations that embed them in more than one nation-state (Stephen 19),

we must also examine this notion of citizenship as one that is constantly evolving "[t]o speak of citizenship in any meaningful way is, thus, to speak of the specific historically constituted, politically verified, and socially conditioned and differentiated relations within and across sovereign communities" (Oboler 4).

In this continuous evolution of citizenship, one transnational body that brings to light the complex nature of this topic is the European Union (EU)—starting as a coal and

steel community and developing into the more familiar transnational entity that exists today. European integration began as an economic endeavor, but has recently broadened into the political realm. Social integration, however, still remains relatively undeveloped and “one of the biggest tasks facing the European Union (EU) is how to manage transnational space” (Rumford 25). Transnational bodies such as the EU highlight this question of citizenship and belonging, and the ways in which nation-state borders relate to the construction of citizenship:

Postnational citizenship forms – not limited to EU citizenship, by any means – offer inclusion and participation in national state systems of rights and benefits without the need for formal membership of the nationally constituted community (Soysal as cited in Rumford 29).

This kind of postnational, or transnational, citizenship invites us to closely examine the traditional link that exists between a society and its government, and how the global citizenship norms factor into this relationship. Postnational citizenship forms seek to flush out the kinds of relationships that might exist between a society and a government when there is no need for ‘formal membership.’

These constructions may also index a sense of belonging that is not necessarily tied to a nation-state, or to nation-state borders, but rather to an identity, such as with Kurdistan, or Palestine. With regard to Palestine, this identity has developed, changed, and shifted over time, but at its core, it is the desire of the people to return to, and establish a state in, the land of Palestine:

their insistence on their distinct Palestinian identity is a direct result of Palestine’s political weakness. In other words, Palestinians seem to feel that in the absence of strong institutions or a recognized state to support them, an

insistence on Palestinian identity is all that holds them together (Angrist 412).

This example explores the ways in which a distinct lack of ‘formal citizenship’ can strengthen the feeling of belonging that an individual has to a certain group or identity.

Though the evolution of the EU was primarily a twentieth century phenomenon, migration has existed for thousands of years, yet it still remains incredibly relevant in today’s political climate. As questions of immigration, naturalization, and migrants continue to occupy space in political debates, it continues to be important to investigate the ways in which these discussions take place. In some spaces, it seems that there is a desire to simplify matters as much as possible in order to make it easier to understand and potentially easier to base policies upon these simplified understandings, such as who qualifies for social benefits and who does not. The reality of the situation, however, is that it is extremely nuanced and complex, with no universal definition or understanding.

It is the purpose of this paper to investigate the relationship between the historical constructions of citizenship and explore other ways in which we might possibly discuss this topic to better encompass transnationalism and migration. The focus will be on the ways in which this idea relates specifically to Cuba and Puerto Rico that both have a complex history with the United States and citizenship (Nackerud). This paper will then critically examine the ways in which various creative mediums deal with this topic, exploring how the lived realities of individuals might differ from the expected descriptions of the term. Through this analysis, it is the hope that the spaces in which these types of conversations occur can be widened, that we can see a truth that is just as important as the evolving legal one.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Citizenship is a concept that has been at the center of both ancient and modern political thought (Bickel 33). From Aristotle's musings to Locke's doctrine of natural rights, there has always been a desire to examine, define, and redefine the relationship between a people and their government. Aristotle defined a state as the citizens who comprise it—and that who is considered a citizen will vary depending on the ruling form of government, whether that be an oligarchy or democracy. In the case of tyranny, Aristotle argues that this type of rule “presumably has not citizens” (Bickel 34), as there is not a reciprocal relationship between the citizenry and the state, insisting that one of the primary components of citizenship was a relation that involved both of these actors. Those who instigated the French Revolution “called each other citizen, denoting their participation in the state” (Bickel 34). In direct opposition to this, “the communists later called each other comrade, denoting their common allegiance to an ideology, a movement” (Bickel 34), rather than to citizens participating in a state.

While Locke's doctrine, “proceeding as it does from natural rights, is not, as might appear, universalist; it is intended to support and justify the national, constitutional state” (Bickel 34). Citizenship was a notion that was inherently tied to power and to the governments that created and defended sovereign nation-states. It did not merely delineate the responsibilities of the state to its citizens, but rather a way to continue to extend the power of the “constitutional state” (Bickel 34). Citizenship has been used by governments as a “a public tool that legitimizes public policy” (Oboler 22). It provides a justification for the actions that governments take, or do not take, on behalf of its citizenry.

*Nation-states and Citizenship* The traditional notion of the nation-state fails to accurately convey the complexities of identities that exist within a certain geographic territory. By nature, nation-states homogenize, conveying the idea that a single culture can encapsulate a single geographic region, which is entirely inaccurate, especially when referring to those of a diaspora (Gupta and Ferguson). Mass movements of populations from the Caribbean to the United States led to the intertwining of distinct cultures, languages, and identities. Due to a variety of factors, many people found that they were not given the opportunity to exist outside of the homogeneity of the nation-state, which often led to the stifling of culture and identity. In order to prevent this suffocation, space is needed in which a multiplicity of identities can be fully expressed. This space is a “vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of . . . unnatural boundar[ies]” (Anzaldúa 25). The place where “the lifeblood of two worlds merg[es] to form a third country- a border culture” (Anzaldúa 25) opens up the freedom to exist outside the constraints of the nation-state. The traditional thinking of nation-state borders can lead to incredibly limiting and dichotomous ways of thinking, in a way that can reduce such varied categories of belonging to *us* versus *them*.

One area where this kind of thinking is incredibly relevant is in our construction of citizenship, where the rights that are afforded to an individual are often determined based on whether one is a citizen or not. While there are different legal statuses that people can hold, from being a permanent resident to having no official papers, this topic is still often viewed in very simplistic terms. It fails to encompass what citizenship means to those identifying themselves as holding multiple citizenships, but do not necessarily hold official documents that state that this is the case.

*Development of the Term in U.S. History* In order to situate this discussion in the context of this paper, we will investigate the ways in which the United States has defined citizenship. In the original Constitution of the United States, citizenship was not defined (Oboler 5). The Supreme Court case of *Dred Scott v. Sanford* in 1857 conflated ‘citizen,’ and ‘people,’ “arguing that by virtue of their race [, those considered to be black] could never be citizens” (Balkin and Levinson 53). Chief Justice Roger Taney believed that “the nation’s Founding Fathers did not mean to include blacks when they spoke of ‘the People of the United States’” (Oboler 6). This court case also set the precedent of excluding non-citizens, “that those who could not be citizens [would be] forever outside of the political community” (Balkin & Levinson 54). This Supreme Court decision permanently tied this notion of citizenship to race, and to those that have the ‘right’ to be considered citizens. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was designed to reverse the *Dred Scott* decision, and through the ratification of the 14th Amendment,

Congress...not only acknowledge[ed] the inclusion of African Americans in the polity....[but also] expand[ed]...the previous, more restricted understanding of the national community to include the idea that *all* categories of citizenship, and of rights, have to be publicly discussed in relation to all persons involved (Oboler 6).

But in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court determined that racial segregation was not only legal, but that “legislation [was] incapable of eradicating racial instincts” (Oboler 6). Although *Brown v. Board of Education* ended legal segregation, it was not until the Civil Rights movement that “the extension of rights and entitlement of US citizenship to racial(ized) minorities, women, and other groups” (Oboler 7) was even considered. Although the extension of citizenship rights to these communities has been considered

since the 1960s, as we will begin to see, this did not necessarily constitute full citizenship rights.

## DEFINING CITIZENSHIP

As previously mentioned, the historical construction of citizenship has traditionally been based on nation-state borders and the rights and privileges that the governments of these nation-states afford those living within them. In our continued discussion of what it means to be an immigrant, and also perhaps a transmigrant, it is imperative that we also “[seek] to explore the affective, collective, and social dimensions of membership and belonging that often go unexamined in political discussions concerning the rights-bearing citizen” (Rincón and Oboler 142), that “there is more to the sense of belonging than the formal state rules and regulations concerning birthplace, naturalization, and citizenship” (Oboler 11).

The term citizenship can be difficult to define precisely because it “can refer to a category, to a tie, or to an identity built on one of them, even on several of them” (Tilly 7). In various constructions of citizenship, the word itself is utilized to refer to a variety of concepts, that while related, are not equivalents. The category of citizenship can “[designate] a set of actors - citizens - distinguished by their shared privileged position vis-a-vis some particular state” (Tilly 7). Citizens are therefore a category of people, considered by the state, that receive certain benefits for being categorized as such. The tie of citizenship describes the “enforceable mutual relation between an actor and state agents” (Tilly 7-8). Citizenship as an identity “can refer to the experience and public

representation of category, tie, or role” (Tilly 7-8). The following sections will work to broaden our understanding of what it means to be a ‘citizen,’ moving beyond traditional conceptions of the term.

*Ethnic versus Civic Citizenship* We cannot discuss this notion of what constitutes citizenship without examining who has historically been considered a citizen. During much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dichotomy between ethnic and civic citizenship developed: “[a] simple classificatory scheme [arose] that distinguish[ed] nations as civic, political, or territorial on one hand, versus ethnic or cultural on the other” (Shulman 555). This dichotomy between ethnic and civic citizenship is an extension of ethnic versus civic constructions of the nation-state and the ways in which the state determines certain groups to be citizens, and others to be non-citizens.

Ethnic citizenship is the notion that “ethnic status or ancestry determine who is accepted as a full member of the community” (Reeskens 1). As one dimension of citizenship is belonging within a larger community, it is relatively simple to imagine the ways in which ethnic citizenship creates the group of belonging. By creating a citizenry rooted in this idea of descent (Bloemraad et al. 158), and the common heritage of a people (Shulman 555), it is immediately clear who is afforded certain rights and who is not. This way of thinking about citizenship matches up with *jus sanguinis* (where citizenship status is determined by ‘blood’) and can involve more difficult naturalization procedures for those who are not considered members of the citizenry (Bloemraad et al. 158).

Civic citizenship, on the other hand, “is considered as open and inherently political: adherence to legal norms is the main criterion to distinguish citizens from non-citizens” (Reeskens 1). This type of understanding of nationhood and citizenship is closely associated with *jus soli* (birthright citizenship) and has an easier process with regard to naturalization (Bloemraad et al. 158). The citizenry can be expanded further than ethnic citizenship allows because belonging is not related necessarily to blood, but rather to “voluntary political membership” (Bloemraad et al. 158) as a way to indicate belonging.

Both of these frames of thinking about citizenship provide different levels of inclusion of those who are not inherently a part of the citizenry and must usually follow naturalization procedures: the immigrant. Due to the large-scale migration during the 20th century, researchers became interested in investigating the ways in which civic and ethnic citizenship had “different notions of belonging for immigrants’ legal status, rights, and participation” (Bloemraad et al. 158). Because ethnic citizenship is inherently tied to blood, rooted in descent as the formation of the ‘citizenry,’ it usually excludes the immigrant from inclusion in the ‘group of belonging.’ Civic citizenship, on the other hand, arguably offers immigrants a greater chance of being considered a part of the ‘group belonging’ (Bloemraad et al. 158). As we will begin to examine, while civic constructions of citizenship allow more space for the immigrant to be included, this space is still limited because the ‘citizen’ cannot exist without the notion of ‘one who does not belong,’ or the immigrant.

From these dual conceptualizations of who constitutes the citizenry, a paradox emerges. Today, many would argue that citizenship in the United States is more civic-

based, but this has not historically been the case. Although “Americans have always officially defined full membership in the American civic community in terms of readiness to embrace egalitarian, liberal, republican political principles” (Smith 15), as we have begun to see, this has not always been a reflection of reality. In fact,

American law had long been shot through with forms of second-class citizenship, denying personal liberties and opportunities for political participation to most of the adult population on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, and even religion (Smith 2).

These second-class citizenships align more with an ethnic construction of the citizenry, whereby the U.S. citizenry has been historically defined as being white and male (Ngai).

*Dual Citizenship* Dual citizenship is a way in which citizens can potentially keep their membership to two separate nation-states. It is often viewed in a negative light because it can complicate the direct “link between the citizen and the nation-state” (Bloemraad 392). However, this notion of citizenship—where a person would be considered a full citizen in two separate nation-states—allowed a small widening of the space by tying citizenship to more than one nation-state. This phenomenon rose out of transnationalism as both a cause and effect: “multiple passports provide easy access to and rights in different geopolitical spaces- and it designates dual identities” (Bloemraad 394). Once again, though, this concept is strictly tied to the hegemonic borders of the nation-state, which as we have begun to examine, isn’t necessarily the only way to think about these types concepts.

This notion moves past the ‘legal’ definition of citizenship, and the ways in which a state might conceive of the citizen, to a more comprehensive way of imagining who

constitutes the citizenry. It allows us a way to think differently about dual citizenship by offering two new sides to the dual:

first, in the sense it has always been for many migrants—that while they are in the home country (Italy, Haiti) they are its citizens, while when they are in the U.S. they are Americans; second, also in the new sense that the diaspora—those who are, as the etymology of the word indicates, scattered asunder like seeds—can now participate fully in the social and political life of both countries, exerting quite an influence on the course of the political life in the home country (Pedraza 425).

An important thing to note about this definition is that the ‘citizen’ supposedly has the ability to “participate fully in the social and political life of both countries,” (Pedraza 425), which is not always the case. Nevertheless, thinking about citizenship in these terms “has transformed the way in which migrants incorporate themselves into the societies where they reside” (Guarnizo 1214). Citizenship is an inherently social concept, created and performed through various social and political practices, “often grounded upon the perception that [citizens] share some form of common identity, often based upon a place of origin and the cultural and linguistic traits associated with it” (Vertovec 573). Dual citizenship is one such way in which multiple identities can be accounted for.

*Cultural Citizenship and Belonging* The concept of "cultural citizenship" is a way in which culture and cultural heritages can add another layer to these discussions of legal citizenship, and can be especially useful when talking about citizenship and migrants.

Aihwa Ong describes cultural citizenship as

the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory. Cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being-

made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society. Becoming a citizen depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations (738).

This definition further expands this notion of what citizenship can mean, by making it a negotiation between the state and people, whose cultural practices and beliefs are formed by this relation with the state.

Ong also brings up this notion of belonging, which is an important question to consider when discussing citizenship (Ong; Rosaldo). Citizenship is not only about rights, but it is also about belonging and what it means to be part of a larger community. Rosaldo takes this notion a step further, saying that cultural citizenship “claims that, in a democracy, social justice calls for equity among all citizens” (Rosaldo 402). Rosaldo continues by stating that “[the] notion of belonging means full membership in a group or ability to influence one’s destiny by having a significant voice in basic decisions” (402), which builds upon Ong’s argument, where “full membership” and the “ability to influence one’s destiny,” are important factors. This ability to influence one’s destiny is an important consideration in the way that immigrants have agency over their lives.

## U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND THE IMMIGRANT

While citizenship has been expressly defined in relation to those who are determined to be citizens, who is determined as a citizen cannot exist without those who are considered non-citizens. As Oboler writes, “the citizen cannot exist without her counterpart — the immigrant” (Rincón and Oboler 138). Those who consider themselves citizens require, to some extent, the presence of immigrants, which validate “the greatness of the nation,”

(Rincón and Oboler 138) by demonstrating that a certain nation's citizenship is highly desirable to others who do not currently hold citizenship: “the immigrant's ‘choice’ to reside in the US and [their] potential assimilation endorses the greatness of the nation and reinforces the value of its highly sought citizenship” (Rincón and Oboler 138). These immigrants often give up certain privileges, rights, and livelihoods in order to pursue a chance at a better life (Obejas).

Non-citizens are entirely necessary in these constructions of what it means to be a citizen, because they validate those who are ‘citizens,’ but the status and treatment of non-citizens is not necessarily a pleasant one. As Casteñeda argues, “US citizenship, created and protected by laws that are lived and enacted by individuals, simultaneously requires migrants’ presence in US society even as it constitutes an ongoing obstacle for them” (as cited in Oboler 17). These obstacles come in various forms, from the procedures that must be followed to apply for formal citizenship to the ways in which “formal citizenship does not erase the exile's [migrant's] permanent sense of detachment” (Rincón and Oboler 140) by limiting the ways in which those who are perceived as ‘other’ can interact with, and participate in, the “common good” (Oboler 5).

As Alexander Bickel discusses in *The Morality of Consent*, “[it] has always been easier, it always will be easier, to think of someone as a noncitizen than to decide that he is a non-person” (53). Governments, and by extension those who held political power, often used citizenship as a way to impose certain rules about who could belong and who could not. Rather than determine someone as a non-person, and not give that person any certain rights, it was much easier, and more widely accepted, to say that one is a non-

citizen; therefore, it is simply not the obligation of the government to afford this person certain rights or privileges.

## POWER AND CITIZENSHIP

It is important to understand the spaces in which much of these discussions have happened—spaces of power. As Ong discusses in her definition, “becoming a citizen depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations” (Ong 438). Power and citizenship are inherently linked, as those in power play a large role in determining who is considered a citizen and who is not. Those in power often have the ability to actively negotiate the rights that a citizen has and who is even considered to be worth such rights. This can affect the agency that individuals have, especially those who are considered to be outside the ‘citizenry,’ such as immigrants. One way that agency can be defined is as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 275), an act that is invariably tied to the social worlds in which we live. We can often be limited in our ability to act in our social and cultural worlds by those in positions of power, whether this be limitations via language or education requirements. Those who are not in positions of power might be pushed to act in ways that differ from those who are, ‘performing’ citizenship in a different manner—perhaps working harder to fit into a dominant culture or society, to go to great lengths to assimilate and not be perceived as the ‘other.’

In the past, citizenship has been a relationship that has been defined and negotiated by the imagined community of a nation-state (Anderson). As Kuntsler

discusses in *The Geography of Nowhere*, “a community is not something you *have*, like a pizza...[i]t is a living organism based on a web of interdependencies” (185-6). Within this living organism, those with the most legal power—the state—have been the facilitators of the citizenship relationship, representing “the fundamental principles of living together have been established — and in the case of a democratic community, negotiated and agreed upon — ideally for the benefit of all” (Oboler 4). The use of the word *ideally* is important to mention, as reality does not reflect this idyllic picture. With policies being made in a top-down manner, many voices in the imagined community are left out. It becomes important to expand the ways in which voices can be heard when considering precisely what it means to be a citizen.

## CREATIVE MEDIUMS AND POLITICS

Through various mediums, we will examine why it is important to consider all the ways that citizenship can be construed in order to better reflect lived realities. This examination will focus specifically on two islands that have a long and complex relationship with the United States and citizenship: Cuba and Puerto Rico.

It is important to acknowledge that the field of political science has attempted to examine the ways in which

our most enduring institutions are based on collective understandings; that they are reified structures that were once upon a time conceived *es nihilo* by human consciousness; and that these understandings were

subsequently diffused and consolidated until they were taken for granted (Adler 322).

This theory is known as constructivism, and is often described as the middle ground between rationalist and interpretive approaches (Adler). I mention this theory in this paper because it demonstrates the ways in which the realm of political science does incorporate this idea of words and language as the shapers of meaning, in the ways that these “reified structures” are reinforced by human understanding—that the way that the international system is set up is that everyone is working together to create a certain understanding of the world. Constructivism also considers power as it is those who lead that “*create* threats by making arbitrary distinctions between friends and foes” (Spanier and Hook 81-2). Political leaders are the ones who assist in the making of the ‘other,’ and who dictate which narratives matter in the creation of policy.

Constructivism is also interested in identity and how this can be socially constructed:

constructivists believe that the human capacity for reflection or learning has its greatest impact on the manner in which individuals and social actors attach meaning to the material world and cognitively frame the world they know, experience and understand (Adler 322).

Extending this notion further, we can begin to see the ways in which a constructivist viewpoint would define this notion of citizenship—through the myriad of ways in which individuals and societies frame the subject. Using this kind of framework, we can look even further to examine how exactly societies and individuals contextualize this subject, whether that be through literature or video or other means. It is the goal of this section to possibly recast this notion of citizenship in many different lights by examining it through various creative mediums.

Studies in the past have combined literature and politics to further expand the space in which a certain conversation takes place. In the article “World Literature and World Politics,” Bleiker discusses the limiting nature of only approaching a topic through the political perspective. He talks about “these restrictive ways of remembering and forgetting world politics” and the way that the political system itself is structured and the ways in which we, as a collective society, remember (417). The system of international relations frames issues and concepts in such a way as to influence what becomes ‘important,’ and what fades into the distant memory. When we combine both creative expressions, such as literature or art, and politics in an analysis of a topic, we can begin to widen the space to think about these topics, as politics, and our political world by extension, is “about who has the authority to narrate” (Kiser 572). Politics is shaped by those in power, and people in positions of power are given the ability to narrate the way in which political history is shaped, influencing what becomes important, what is remembered or forgotten. These creative mediums are not removed from the political world, but rather they “should be recognized as...major and integral [parts] of the transaction that engender political behavior” (Edelman 2); they provide a means by which to broaden the political conversation, potentially challenging the dominant narrative. Art specifically works to “construct and periodically reconstruct perceptions” (Edelman 9) through visual forms, often forcing the viewer to consider the subject from a different perspective. By combining various creative mediums, there is a potential to expand the space in which these discussions occur.

For example, in her collection, “The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity and Resistance in African Literature,” Obioma Nnaemeka writes about the

complex idea of the mother, “looking at the paradoxical location of (m)other as both central and marginal” (Nnaemeka). Nnaemeka uses both a political frame, as well as a literary one, in order to investigate this concept. Through the use of literature, this collection of stories is able to expand these notions of feminism, in which the literature itself “recast[s it] in different and complex ways” (Nnaemeka). Without the assistance of a close analysis of literature, this collection would not have the depth that it currently does—it would not be able to examine the topic of motherhood from broader perspectives. A similarly close examination of literature and art can lend itself to a broadening of this conversation regarding citizenship.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This section will first consider the historical relationships that have existed between the United States and Cuba and Puerto Rico, with a focus on how citizenship has evolved. As Lola Rodríguez de Tió famously stated in her poem “Mi libro de Cuba,” “Cuba y Puerto Rico son/ De un pájaro las dos alas” (11-2), or that Cuba and Puerto Rico were two wings of the same bird. Both islands were Spanish colonies, and have complex and racialized histories influenced by the legacy of slavery. After this background, there will be an analysis of a variety of sources—from literature to art—to explore the ways in which citizenship is discussed in these types of spaces, and what this can contribute to our understanding of the term.

*Cuba* In terms of citizenship and immigration and the United States, one especially relevant nation-state is Cuba. Since the Spanish-American War, U.S.-Cuba relations have

been wrought with tension, but it was the Cuban Revolution of 1959 that drastically altered the landscape (Suddath). After Fidel Castro gained power in a revolution, the United States became a safe haven for political refugees, with very open border policies concerning Cuban immigrants (Henken). Over the past 50 years of immigration, there have been various waves in which the principal motivations for leaving differed. The first wave was primarily composed of Cuba's elite, who were not "tied to Batista's government but were bound to a political and economic structure that...was completely interpenetrated by the demands and imitative of American capital" (Pedraza, "Cuba's refugees" 312). Between 1960 and 1962, Operation Pedro Pan occurred, where more than 14,000 children were sent to the United States by their frightened parents. Fearing indoctrination by the Castro government, children approximately between the ages of 12 and 18 were airlifted from Havana to Miami. Many thought that they would be returning to Cuba shortly (Weber). As time progressed and it appeared that the conflict would not be solved as easily as some hoped, the second wave of immigrants came to the United States. This group was primarily composed of the working class, seeking better economic opportunities. The third wave was composed of the *Marielitos*, and it was during this period that the Mariel Boatlift occurred. Boats manned mainly by Cuban immigrants left the shores of Miami and crossed the 90 miles of sea to Cuba's Mariel Harbor to rescue family members and bring them back to the United States (Pedraza, "Cuba's refugees"). The fourth wave was during the 1990s and was comprised of the *balseros*, who were so desperate to come to the United States that they left on *balsas*—"rafts, tires, or other makeshift vessels...risking death due to starvation, drowning, or sharks" (Pedraza, "Cuba's refugees" 320). This fourth wave happened during the "special period," which

was when the end of the Cold War brought increased economic hardship to Cuba, forcing many to the United States (Schiffman). Throughout these various waves, the United States continued to treat Cuban immigrants different than others from the same region.

Cuban exceptionalism, especially in relation to the United States, is often discussed in academic literature. U.S. policy concerning immigrants from Cuba has differed from every other island in the Caribbean, primarily due to geopolitical reasons and the importance of Cuba in the Cold War (Nackerud). The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 solidified the relationship, making the process of gaining access to the United States, and thus to U.S. citizenship, more streamlined than for many other immigrants. The 1995 revision of this act came to be known as the “wet foot, dry foot” policy, where those who were found in the 100 miles of ocean separating the United States and Cuba were sent back, but those who made it to the physical, geographic territory of the United States were able to claim political asylum (Nackerud). If immigrants were able to make it to land, they were then able to file for a green card one year and one day after they had been paroled or admitted to the United States, and then could begin the normal process toward obtaining citizenship. While Cuban immigrants were being welcomed, the U.S. was turning away many other immigrants, from nation-states like Haiti and many in Central America, often creating tension (Nackerud).

*Puerto Rico* Since 2013, there are more Puerto Ricans living on the U.S. mainland than on the island itself (Krogstad). The number of people emigrating from the island has continued to rise, as the economic situation on the island continues to remain unstable (Krogstad). But unlike other islands in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory that has a unique relationship with the United States and citizenship.

Spain began earnestly colonizing Puerto Rico in the early 1500s, but the United States gained control at the end of the Spanish- American War in 1898, with no consultation of those living on the island. During this initial period, the status of Puerto Ricans was up in the air, as they no longer held Spanish citizenship, but the United States had not granted them U.S. citizenship either (Whalen). In 1917, the Jones-Shafroth Act ultimately gave citizenship to Puerto Ricans, but “it was never intended to be a grant of *full* citizenship as other non-Puerto Rican US citizens know it” (Oboler 284). It granted

citizenship to people born on the island. But it’s a limited form of citizenship...[which] puts Puerto Rico under federal control but doesn’t allow the island voting representation in Congress. Residents also can’t vote for the president (Allen and Peñaloza).

While this formally changed the status of Puerto Ricans, it did not change the status of the island itself, which still remains an unincorporated territory (Whalen).

Much of the rationale of this decision was not to “[acknowledge]...the individual rights Puerto Ricans might have, but rather as recognition ‘that Puerto Rico belonged to the United States of America’” (as cited by Perea in Oboler 284). Rather than citizenship as a means of demonstrating a certain kind of belonging, the United States government was using this act to demonstrate its power to force a group of people into a certain category of belonging. The Jones-Shafroth Act provided a path to citizenship through naturalization and was replaced by the Nationality Act of 1940 that gave birthright citizenship to all Puerto Ricans (Acevedo). But while the status gave limited forms of citizenship to those on the island, there still remains a disconnect today— where the kinds of citizenship that Puerto Ricans experience often varies depending on whether they live on the island or on the mainland United States. Those on the island might be

considered to hold a “legislative” form and those on the mainland a “constitutional” one (Oboler 284).

In its limited form, U.S. citizenship allows Puerto Ricans to travel freely from the island to the mainland, which many Puerto Ricans value. But due to the historical development of the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, there have been long-standing debates about whether Puerto Rico should be fully incorporated into the United States, become completely independent, or remain as a commonwealth. In a 2012 two-part referendum, 54% of voters stated that they wanted a change in status. But in the second part, which questioned what exact change they would like to see, so many people left it blank that the results were inconclusive (Coto). In June of 2017, Puerto Ricans will be voting on this issue once again, demonstrating the extent to which these discussions are relevant today (Allen and Peñaloza). Questions of citizenship and belonging have been, and will continue to be, central to ongoing negotiations.

## ANALYSIS OF CREATIVE MEDIUMS

The following works were selected because of the various mediums of creative expression that they represent, as well as the subject matters that they consider. Although the previous studies that we have examined have focused primarily on academic literature, I would argue that examining more types of creative expression allows the conversation to become even wider. Each form provides a unique manner through which ideas can be expressed, from prose to poetry to art. To better explore the relationship between Cuba and the United States and citizenship, I chose two pieces to examine. The

first piece is an episode of *¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?* which examines the ways that a multi-generational, Cuban-American family interacts with these notions of citizenship. The second work is a short story from a larger collection that deals with this notion of belonging. To look at Puerto Rico and U.S. citizenship, the first work that will be examined is a poem which speaks to the challenges that immigrants often face when attempting to integrate their lives into broader U.S. society and culture. The final work is an art exhibit that is incredibly timely, remembering 100 years of ‘citizenship’ for Puerto Ricans. Taken together, these works explore the myriad of ways in which policies regarding citizenship affect the lived realities of those most directly impacted by them. Each creative medium provides a means to understand more broadly the way that this topic is treated in the different spaces. Together, I hope that these works will help to complicate the spaces in which these discussions of citizenship are happening.

*U.S. Citizenship and Television ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?(Qué pasa)* is a U.S. television series about a Cuban-American family, the Peñas, who are living their multilingual and multigenerational lives in Miami:

This classic series focuses on the identity crisis of the members of the Peña family as they are pulled in one direction by their elders - who want to maintain Cuban values and traditions - and pulled in other directions by the pressures of living in a predominantly Anglo society ("El Official Website").

Through a mix of English and Spanish and Spanglish, this series uses humor in order to address a wide range of topics, many of them relating to the nature of belonging and how one can belong.

In Season 2, Episode 6, entitled “Citizenship,” the focus is entirely on this question of citizenship. Joe, a teenage boy, wants to apply for scholarships to go to college, but many of these scholarships require that the applicant be a U.S. citizen. Since Joe is under 18, in order for him to become a naturalized citizen, one of his parents must also be one. We learn that his sister is a U.S. citizen because she was born in the United States, but no one else in the family holds this status. Joe’s mother really wants to help her son, in whatever capacity that she can, but Joe’s father is much more resistant. Joe’s father sees getting his citizenship in the United States as a betrayal of his own identity as a Cuban, and the sense of belonging that he feels with others who identify as such. Joe, on the other hand, does not have many memories of the geographic land-space of Cuba, only to his family, and through them, to Cuba. In his mind, becoming a U.S. citizen is about being able to express fully his own identity and belonging, as he feels that he cannot properly remember, or identify, as Cuban to be a ‘citizen.’ But because he has lived the majority of his life within the borders of the United States, he feels that he belongs there. Joe also brings up the point that without being a citizen, he cannot vote, and so does not necessarily have a formal way to express political opinions. This idea of voting as reason to obtain citizenship arises toward the end of the episode where there is a vote to build a rail-line through the Peña house, but because many of the family are not citizens, they are not able to vote. Interestingly, this does not appear to drastically alter many of the family members’ feelings about citizenship, especially those of the older generation.

Via a sitcom that primarily utilizes humor to deliver its message, the viewer is able to gain a better understanding of this notion of citizenship. What does citizenship

truly concern? Is it simply about voting or does it encompass more? Is the citizenship of one country worth giving up the citizenship of another country, a country that you feel that you will be returning to shortly (as many Cubans did that left in the first wave directly after the Revolution)? We are able to see how age and language can map onto this idea, where the older generation feels much stronger ties to Cuba and is wary of giving these up.

In terms of citizenship, and more specifically, citizenship tests, one thing that becomes clear from *¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?* is the role that language itself plays in these discussions. In the episode, the grandparents and the mom attend a citizenship class where it becomes clear that many of those in attendance do not speak much English, which is the language the citizenship test is given in. In order to gain access to citizenship in the United States, one needs to have a certain level of ability to navigate English. This showcases the power that language can have, and more specifically, the consequences of the ways in which societies think about language. Invariably, by gaining citizenship through naturalization, it becomes clear that this is tied up in not only language, but English specifically as the language of power.

This episode allows the viewer a chance to see how these notions of belonging and assimilation, of difference, and of history, are portrayed within the family dynamics of one Cuban-American family.

*Cuban Identity in Story* Cuban literature is a "cultural and topographic exoticism on the one hand, and its proximity to and similarity with the US on the other, fodder for an active and robust dynamic of discursive and literary renderings" (Rincón and Oboler

414). It reflects the tensions that exist currently between the United States and Cuba and is a testament to the long and complex history that they share. Through these literary renderings, we can continue examining the ways in which the notion of citizenship is constructed.

In her novella, *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?*, Achy Obejas writes stories about people who often find themselves living on the margins of society—as immigrants, as lesbians, as people with AIDs. In the final story, titled the same as the entire work (“We Came All the Way”), Obejas writes about the immigration experience of a girl and her family in the early 1960s. Throughout the work, it is possible to see these themes of citizenship and belonging, and the ways in which the United States’ policy toward Cuban immigrants was incredibly different than its policies towards other immigrants.

The story starts with the first-person narrator describing the journey from Cuba to Miami. Upon reaching land, the family is questioned, but “[it’s] all a formality because this is 1963, and no Cuban claiming political asylum actually gets turned away. We’re evidence that the revolution has failed the middle class and that communism is bad” (Obejas 113). In the narrator’s claim that no one who is seeking political asylum gets turned away not only is it possible to see the way that U.S. policy actively affected the lives of Cuban immigrants (in that no one was rejected), but also the tone is of one of dry humor, which also suggests that other migrants were treated differently. During the second half of the 20th century, it became extremely important for the United States to actively oppose communism, and one way in which this was possible was through

opening its borders to those fleeing communist regimes. This was a way in which the United States could simultaneously be seen as welcoming to immigrants, and also making ‘Americanness’ more valuable. As we have seen previously, being ‘American’ cannot be defined without considering those who are not ‘American,’ without the ‘other.’ We can also see this when the narrator says that “My parents will never say, as if somehow they know that their lives were meant to exist only in opposition” (Obejas 125). Their lives as migrants would always have them existing in opposition to those who were considered fully ‘American.’ This quote comes from a portion of the story in which the narrator is questioning what would have happened if the revolution had not happened and her family would have stayed in Cuba. Her own identity was shaped by her parent’s decision to leave Cuba and migrate to the United States, but she herself had no say.

Much like we saw in *Qué Pasa*, there are generational differences that existed—where the narrator’s father is “convinced there’s no need to become a citizen of the United States (the usual prerequisite for voting) because Nixon will get [them] back to Cuba in no time, where [her] father’s dormant citizenship will spring to life” (Obejas 119). This quote begins to unravel the exile mindset that existed after the first large wave of immigrants. Many migrants during the first wave of immigration thought that the crisis would be over shortly and they would be able to return to Cuba almost immediately. As time passed and this became much more unlikely, they began to accept life in the United States as more permanent. By choosing to describe his citizenship as dormant, this notion of multiple citizenships is brought up, where people can hold many senses of belonging, with some being more important than others. Within these multiple citizenships, we can see the creation of a personal hierarchy, in which certain groups of belonging matter

more than others. Individuals may often rank their own ‘citizenships’ in terms of which one they feel a stronger affinity to.

Many of the first wave of immigrants came from Cuba not because of political reasons, but because their way of life depended upon American capital to function. When the Castro government gained control, Cuba’s elite saw their old life and opportunities fade away, and so many decided to migrate: “We came for her, so she could have a future” (Obejas 114). In the minds of both parents, the United States represented a place where numerous opportunities would exist for their daughter—a place where plenty abounded as the narrator describes using asyndeton: “...we are in the land of plenty—row upon row of cereal boxes, TV dinners, massive displays of fresh pineapple, crate after crate of oranges, shelves of insect repellent...” (Obejas 122). The list of items at the supermarket illustrates how the United States represented the land of endless opportunity, as much like in the supermarket, the choices were never-ending. This opportunity also could be extended to more freedom to express identity, but this was not the case as the narrator’s parents had very specific ideas about what they wanted their daughter to be. Her dad wanted her to be “[a] lawyer, then a judge...he longs for the power and prestige such a career would bring” (Obejas 117). Her mom wants her to be a domestic mother who has two children, a “North American Man,” and a career in broadcasting (Obejas 117). As she grew up, they began to question whether or not their daughter was living life the way they had hoped.

Towards the end of the story, the narrator is interested in going back to Cuba, and finds out that she does not have the appropriate papers, that she “came to the U.S. too

young to make the decision to leave for [herself] — that it was in fact [her] parents who made it for [her] — the Cuban government [did] not recognize [her] U.S. citizenship” (125). This once again complicates the notion of citizenship—even with the correct ‘papers,’ citizenship is not something that is agreed upon universally. What is citizenship based upon and who has the right to recognize it? Even though formal citizenship is represented here by certain documents, the narrator brings up belonging through more visceral memories of the heat and the sea. Memories influence identities, which then influences who one identifies with, creating groups of belonging. Often, these groups of belonging can be indexed by a certain citizenship, but other times, this is far from the truth.

In this short story, the descriptions of these visceral memories appear first with the green sweater, which “smells of salt and Cuban dirt and [the narrator’s] grandmother’s house” (114-5). The narrator is only ten when her family migrates from Cuba and so for her young life, it is the only home that she has ever known. The sweater is a physical representation of this sense of belonging. Home and belonging is often tied to memory, both personal and cultural. In the cab home from her father’s funeral, the author says that she’ll “be hot and stuffy...and try[ing] to imagine something of yearning and hope” (129). This phrase seems to invoke the yearning and hope that she felt as a child moving to the United States, and by mentioning the heat and humidity, it seems that she could be talking about the island, and how life was before the United States. This image of the sea also comes up the first time the narrator makes love to a Cuban, with “sea foam between [her mouth]...and tongues [that] poke each other like wily porpoises” (126). Both the sea and the heat seem to be the visceral memories of a long-lost home.

This short story begins to explore the ways in which the United States' immigration policy towards Cuba directly affected the lives of those who came seeking more opportunities. Despite the border itself being more open for Cubans, it was still not easy being fully accepted into U.S. society. Belonging and home were not static concepts, but rather a combination of history and memory, and of the ways in which these ideas are socially constructed. In much the same way, since belonging and citizenship are intricately tied together, citizenship is also not a static concept, but rather influenced by society, history, memory, and individuals.

*Examining the Puerto Rican Diaspora through Poetry* Pedro Pietri's "Puerto Rican Obituary" is a poem that allows us to examine the ways in which the traditional nation-state is no longer as relevant in this ongoing conversation regarding citizenship. Nation-state borders impose a "a certain homogeneity" or "fundamental sameness . . . through supposedly shared primordial characteristics such as language or ethnicity" (Carnegie 3) that do not accurately reflect reality. When the idea of the homogenous nation-state is perpetuated, and diversity is not accurately accounted for, this can lead to a stifling of culture and identity, which are both factors that comprise citizenship and belonging.

Through the use of repetition and simple diction, Pietri conveys the physical and mental death that can occur when people are forced into a certain way of being. A common theme throughout the poem is the hard-working nature of the Puerto Ricans: "They worked/ They worked/ They worked" (Pietri 14-6). By repeating this phrase, the reader is given an impression of dedication, of the lengths that these migrant workers will go to in order to survive. Not only did they work extremely hard and then die, but "They were born dead/ and they died dead" (Pietri 155-56). Born into lives where they would be

able to do nothing more than work at low-income jobs, in a country “that wants them destroyed” (Pietri 146), they never truly had the chance to live or experience true belonging. The homogenization that they experienced in the United States led to the stifling of diversity, of beauty, of identity, of the recognition of the characters in the poem—Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga and Manuel—as more than people “born to weep/ and keep the morticians employed” (Pietri 144-45).

Not only was there a stifling of diversity and the ability to express oneself, but there was the creation of an environment that encouraged competition. We can see this evidenced through the way in which the various characters related to English in the United States:

Manuel  
died hating all of them  
Juan  
Miguel  
Milagros  
and Olga  
because they all spoke broken english  
more fluently than he did (Pietri 242-49)

The juxtaposition between “broken english” being spoken “fluently” is interesting to note, perhaps helping to showcase the contradictions that assimilation brought up. How can one speak a language both brokenly and fluently at the same time? In what ways does language index belonging, and how do these ideas also relate to citizenship? On the mainland United States, where Puerto Ricans are technically considered full U.S. citizens, we can begin to see the ways in which language perhaps created a barrier to assimilation. Through the names of the characters, which were “misspelled

mispronounced/ and misunderstood” (Pietri 151-52), this barrier is evidenced. The repetition of the “mis” points to the ways in which the Spanish that they spoke was not understood by the larger community of belonging in the United States—that their names, which could index their culture, their language, their home, are not being accounted for in the larger community.

This dismal picture on the mainland United States is contrasted at the end of the poem, where Pietri describes the true beauty of Puerto Rico and of the “[workers’] latino souls” (Pietri 280). This beauty is emphasized by exploring how the lives of Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga, and Manuel would be different on Puerto Rico compared to the mainland United States. Puerto Rico is the “geography of their complexion” (Pietri 271), a place “where beautiful people sing/ and dance and work together” (Pietri 297-29), “where you do not need a dictionary/ to communicate with your people” (Pietri 301-02). If Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga, and Manuel lived in a space where they could dream about a different world, a world that did not write their names in the “telephone directory of destruction” (Pietri 148), they would be able to “tune into their own imaginations” (Pietri 275) and freely express themselves and their being. Puerto Rico is a place where “Aqui the men and women admire desire/ and never get tired of each other” (Pietri 310-11), speaking to the larger community of belonging that is represented on the island.

Through “Puerto Rican Obituary,” it becomes clear that a certain kind of space is necessary in order for the complete expression and survival of those who migrate from one locale to another. Assimilating into the dominant culture can be quite stifling and does not provide the ability for a multiplicity of identities or belongings. In this space, which Davies describes as “the interplay of movement, escape, and return (also

navigation between islands and the circum-Caribbean) that allows agency” (163), new identities can be constructed and old identities can be expressed. As a liminal space, neither here nor there, new modes of articulation and conceptualizations can be addressed, such as how diaspora can work to build a community up rather than breaking it down (Negron-Muntaner).

*100 Years of Puerto Rican Citizenship through Art* In a new multimedia art collection, entitled *CitiCien*, 100 works by Puerto Rican artists living both on the island and in the diaspora explores the complex relation with U.S. citizenship that Puerto Ricans have had. This work of art coincides with the 100-year-anniversary of the Jones Act, which gave Puerto Ricans access to U.S. citizenship through naturalization, which was then replaced by the Nationality Act of 1940, giving birthright citizenship to all Puerto Ricans (Acevedo). These works are part of a larger movement that seeks to defend Puerto Rico in these critical times, examining through various artistic forms the types of relationships that Puerto Ricans have had with U.S. citizenship.

The collection of art is aptly titled *CitiCien*, a clever play on words that combine the word citizen with the Spanish word for 100. Through the title of the art, we can begin to situate it within a larger context. Not only is this about citizenship, about 100 years of complex citizenship. The 100 pieces of artwork consist of “a black-and-white only palette, the exhibit’s theme is one of visual consistency and commitment, acting as a metaphor of the unified voice and solidarity of Puerto Ricans during this critical political time” (“Citicien Exhibit”). The curator of the exhibit, Adrian “Viajero” Roman, hopes that the ““exhibit will offer viewers a thought provoking space for dialogue around the

multi-faceted narrative of what U.S. citizenship has meant to Puerto Ricans, both on the island and the diaspora, and what its impacts have been” (“CitiCien Exhibit”).

In the article by Acevedo, it is possible to examine a few photos of the pieces of art. In the photos, one of the first elements that is quite striking are the colors, or lack of colors. The uniform black-and-white lends itself to the mission of the project, to creating a unified voice. One of the portions that is most salient is that it contains works from artists both on the island and in the diaspora, potentially signifying the larger connection that exists among all Puerto Ricans, regardless of geographic location. Through the article and the various photos of the exhibit, it is possible to see the ways in which indigeneity and blackness factor into these discussions, with pieces representing “Economicamente esclavos,” and Jayuya, a Taíno symbol (Acevedo). Another photo in the article pictures two artists next to their own work, Jo-El Lopez and Nelson Host Santiago. In the two pieces of art, we can see an image of Uncle Sam saying “Assimilate Spic,” which links these ideas of citizenship and assimilation, much like we observed in “Puerto Rican Obituary.” In order to experience full citizenship, does an immigrant need to assimilate entirely? Is it possible to feel as if one truly belongs without any type of assimilation?

The artwork displayed in the *CitiCien* also explores what 100 years of ‘citizenship’ have looked like for Puerto Ricans, both in the diaspora and on the island. Some of the artwork explores what it meant to not assimilate in a ‘proper’ manner, to not truly belonging in the dominant culture, similar to the themes explored in Pietri’s poem. The purpose of this art was to provide a space in which to seriously discuss and consider the multiple ways that citizenship has been lived by Puerto Ricans. This collection of art

is part of a larger movement known as Defend Puerto Rico, which is a multimedia movement working to redefine and establish what it means to be Puerto Rican. Their website, Defend Puerto Rico, has a variety of content meant to bring attention to the cause of Puerto Rico—from profiles of people involved to a “meme creator” that people can use to show their support of the cause.

This movement seems to be about reclaiming a Puerto Rican identity and citizenship, acknowledging the ways in which the United States has been paramount in shaping both. Creative expressions are a way in which dominant narratives can often be challenged and the voices of those on the margins can come forward. An art exhibit such as this one provides the space that is necessary to open the dialogue around these issues of citizenship, and more specifically, U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico.

## DISCUSSION

Throughout the four works that were examined, a few major themes emerged. Each theme worked to add another layer of complexity to this question of citizenship, helping to shade in details from our earlier discussion of academic literature. These works explore the ways in which lived realities often differ from how idyllic, or solely legalistic, conceptions of citizenship are meant to function. It soon became clear that differences existed across generations of families; the lived experiences of grandparents versus grandchildren colored their perspectives on these topics. These differences then influenced the extent to which different family members assimilated, or even the extent to which they wished to assimilate. One factor that greatly impacted this assimilation was

language. These themes also factored into the extent to which the individuals felt like they belonged within the larger society. Underlying these major themes was this question of agency and power—who defines citizenship and is this definition valid if it does not include the voices of those being defined?

As the academic literature mentioned, legal definitions of citizenship often fail to encompass the diversity of lived experiences, especially in relation to immigrants. Within these immigrant experiences, one factor that can influence lived realities is generation. In the two pieces that focused on Cuba, there were some similarities in how different family members related to this question of citizenship—with the older generations depicted as not as willing to ‘give up’ what they felt as their Cuban identities. In the episode of *Qué pasa*, Joe is trying to convince his parents that obtaining U.S. citizenship will increase the number of opportunities available to them. His father is especially opposed to the idea, and reminisces with Joe’s grandparents about their lives back in Cuba. The older generations in Joe’s family do not see the United States as being able to provide them with the rich experiences that they had in Cuba. In a similar manner, the narrator of “We Came all the Way” describes how her father was incredibly resistant to U.S. citizenship. He did not see it as beneficial to him, especially because he thought that the family would be returning to Cuba shortly. Conversely, her father desires to see his daughter assimilate fully into American life, pursuing a high-powered career. The narrator resists this idea, and instead embraces ideals that her parents saw as more “Cuban,” protesting the Vietnam War and valuing ideals such as equality. Both of these works demonstrate the ways in which generational differences influenced perspectives on citizenship.

The generational differences also affected beliefs about assimilation, and the extent to which different family members wanted to assimilate. In the case of Joe, he wished to become more involved in U.S. culture and society. He viewed assimilation as a way in which to access more fully the opportunities that the United States provides. In “We Came All the Way,” this question of assimilation is both generational, but it is also gendered. The older generations in both works did not see assimilation as strictly necessary, either believing that they would be returning to Cuba shortly or that they could continue to live their lives without becoming more integrated in U.S. society. This more positive view of assimilation is contrasted by the two works that focus on Puerto Rico. In “Puerto Rican Obituary,” being forced to assimilate causes a stifling of identity and culture. The Puerto Ricans on the mainland United States could do nothing more than work, work, and more work, not able to access the various benefits that other U.S. citizens could. In the art collection, there was a piece in which the artist depicted Uncle Sam pointing and saying “Assimilate Spic.” Utilizing this specific language points to the way that assimilation was not a choice, if these migrants were to survive in the United States.

It is important to also contextualize these works, and the ways in which individuals were racialized. Both works focusing on Cuba came from the first wave of Cuban immigrants, who represented the upper class primarily migrating for economic reasons. These were the individuals that had the means with which to migrate, and were also lighter-skinned and so able to ‘pass’ as white. This is contrasted by the works that focus on Puerto Rico, where individuals were racialized in very different ways, thus affecting the extent to which individuals could assimilate.

One of the barriers that made assimilation more difficult was language and the ways in which language itself became a way in which ‘othering’ was done. In both *Qué pasa* and “Puerto Rican Obituary,” we begin to see how language factors into the conversation—both as a way to demonstrate power, but also as a way to be ‘othered.’ In *Qué pasa*, the U.S. citizenship tests were given in English, requiring a certain familiarity with the language. If one did not speak English well enough, the process for obtaining citizenship would become even more difficult. In “Puerto Rican Obituary,” even those who technically hold the status of citizen are often treated as lesser because of their lack of fluency in the dominant language. Language is one way in which to immediately categorize an ‘other’—indexing those who belong and those who do not. Both because language is an expression of power, but also because of the role that it plays in gaining U.S. citizenship, it seemed that this could have blurred the lines between what exactly citizenship is. Could language be an inherent, or implicit, part of citizenship? Is it necessary to have a certain amount of proficiency in a nation-state’s dominant language in order to be able to access full citizenship and to have full agency over decisions? Through the works, it would seem that the answer to both of these questions is yes, that language is inherently a part of citizenship.

Competency in navigating the dominant language is also a factor that can shape the extent to which an individual feels that they belong and thus the ability to access full citizenship. “Puerto Rican Obituary,” speaks to this larger question of belonging. Through the voice of the narrator, we can better understand how those who might be deemed ‘other’ are treated—the ways in which they might be actively restricted from accessing their full citizenship. And the case becomes even more complex when we note

that Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States. While this citizenship might be limited on the actual island, on the mainland United States, we would expect differently. It becomes apparent that legal status of a person does not always index belonging to the larger citizenry, especially in the way that race and ‘othering’ has happened, and continues to happen, in the United States. These notions also appear in the art collection, as many of the pieces showcased the ways in which many Puerto Ricans felt like they did not belong in the larger community. The starkness of the black and white medium lends itself to making strong statements, emphasizing the images that various Puerto Ricans associate with the past 100 years of ‘U.S. citizenship.’

All of these themes relate to this notion of power and agency, and who has the right to determine and define citizenship. This immediately becomes obvious in “We Came All the Way,” when the narrator tried to get a visa to travel to Cuba, but was told that the Cuban government did not recognize her U.S. citizenship. She had migrated too young to make a decision for herself, and so the Cuban government did not view her U.S. citizenship as valid. This particular instance also helps demonstrate the ways in which those in positions of power have the ability to determine how certain terms get used and applied and in what instances. The Cuban government was instilling itself as an expert on the age at which a person could consent to becoming a citizen of another nation-state, holding onto a citizenship and an identity that the person might not necessarily hold any more.

Because of the arguably different values that certain citizenships might hold, and the connection that we have begun to explore between power and agency, it is also important to talk about colonialism and this idea that Raymond Williams presents of a

“lived hegemony” that “it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified” (Williams as cited in Ahearn 277). The power that hegemonies hold is not static, but is dominant and requires multiple people working to perform “hegemony.” U.S. hegemony being performed is evidenced in these works in the ways that immigrants were treated, often as lesser and other. These works showcased a system through which a certain type of U.S. citizen was held as the standard by which all others were measured by, and if people did not look like this person, they were often pressured to conform. Without integrating more fully into the larger society, opportunities were often limited. Not only did the U.S. government dictate the specifications one had to possess to be considered a citizen, but many supported this notion by treating those who were perceived as different as ‘other’ or lesser. In these cases, it was not necessarily the immigrants themselves who were able to define themselves, but rather those with more power. The various individuals in the works did not necessarily have the full agency to determine the path of their own lives, instead forced into one way of being to survive.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Questions of citizenship and belonging have long been at the center of political debates. In this current political climate, it becomes even more important that we consider the topic from every perspective, not just those in positions of power. Citizenship has traditionally been tied to the idea of the nation-state and nation-state borders, but in this increasingly global society, we must work to consider other forms of postnational or

transnational citizenship. In the United States, especially, we cannot divorce these conversations from race and the way that race is used to ‘other.’ The historical development of who was considered the citizenry happened primarily in legal spaces whereby judges determined the ‘citizen’ from the ‘non-citizen.’ In theory, the Civil Rights Act of 1960 was hoped to better incorporate marginalized groups into the larger society of belonging in the United States, but as the creative mediums represented, as well as laws and policies that have been enacted since that affect other marginalized groups, this was not always the case.

Although this work focused primarily on the experiences of immigrants from Cuba and Puerto Rico, it spoke to larger themes and narratives that exist in these conversations. The creative pieces analyzed in this paper work to address the challenges of being ‘othered’ in society. Through the various mediums, we have begun to examine the ways in which this concept of citizenship exists in lived stories, and not just in government or legal spaces. While the stories, television show, and art examined are not necessarily biographical, they represent a truth that is just as valid as the evolving Supreme Court decisions. They offer multiple points of views to consider in the ongoing negotiation of what citizenship is. The lived experiences of those immigrating to the United States are just as valid as the evolving legal definition and, perhaps, even more so as these are the individuals who are most impacted by citizenship and immigration policies. As questions of nationalism and belonging continue to rise, we absolutely must work harder to incorporate the voices and narratives outside of the dominant one. One way with which we could possibly frame these discussions is through this notion of transmigrants, first introduced at the beginning of this work. Perhaps by thinking about

individuals as living their lives across borders, we can more accurately reflect the lived realities of individuals, especially those who migrate from one nation-state to another. Considering issues such as language, assimilation, belonging, and power and agency as discussed herein is an effort to move in a direction where a multiplicity of histories can be accounted for.

## WORKS CITED

- Acevedo, Nicole. "Citicien': 100 Puerto Rican Artists Express Complexity of U.S. Citizenship." *NBCNews.com*. NBCUniversal News Group, 03 Mar. 2017. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/citicien-100-puerto-rican-artists-express-complexities-u-s-citizenship-n728646>>.
- Adler, Emanuel. "Seizing the middle ground: constructivism in world politics." *European journal of international relations* 3.3 (1997): 319-363.
- Allen, Greg, and Marisa Peñaloza. "Puerto Ricans Reflect On A Century Of (Limited) Citizenship." *NPR*. NPR, 02 Mar. 2017. Web. 10 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.npr.org/2017/03/02/517999997/puerto-ricans-reflect-on-a-century-of-limited-citizenship>>.
- Anderson, Benedict R. O. G. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991. Print.
- Angrist, Michele Penner. *Politics & Society in the Contemporary Middle East*. 2nd ed. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2013. Print.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: la frontera*. Vol. 3. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987.
- Balkin, Jack M., and Sanford Levinson. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Dred Scott." *Chi.-Kent L. Rev.* 82 (2007): 49.
- Bickel, Alexander M. *The morality of consent*. Vol. 301. Yale University Press, 1975. Print.
- Bleiker, Roland. "Learning from Art: A Reply to Holden's"" World Literature and World Politics"." *Global Society* 17.4 (2003): 415-428.
- Bloemraad, Irene, Anna Korteweg, and Gökçe Yurdakul. "Citizenship and immigration: Multiculturalism, assimilation, and challenges to the nation-state." *Annu. Rev. Sociol* 34 (2008): 153-179.
- Bloemraad, Irene. "Who Claims Dual Citizenship? The Limits of Postnationalism, the Possibilities of Transnationalism, and the Persistence of Traditional Citizenship." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2004, pp. 389–426., [www.jstor.org/stable/27645383](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27645383). (which one comes first)
- Carnegie, Charles V. *Postnationalism prefigured: Caribbean borderlands*. Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- "Citicien Exhibit." *DEFEND PUERTO RICO*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.defendpr.com/citicien/>>.

- Coto, Danica, N. "Puerto Rico's Campaign to Become the 51st State May Be about to Get a Big Boost." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 6 Nov. 2016. Web. 02 May 2017. <<http://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-puerto-rico-20161103-story.html>>.
- Davies, Carole Boyce, and Monica Jardine. "Imperial Geographies and Caribbean Nationalism: At the Border between "A Dying Colonialism" and US Hegemony." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 151-174.
- Edelman, Murray. *From art to politics: How artistic creations shape political conceptions*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- "El Official Website de ¿Qué Pasa, U.S.A.?" *¿Qué Pasa, U.S.A.?* WPBT2, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.quepasausa.org/>>.
- Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo, Alejandro Portes, and William Haller. "Assimilation and Transnationalism: Determinants of Transnational Political Action among Contemporary Migrants 1." *American journal of sociology* 108.6 (2003): 1211-1248.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. "Beyond "culture": Space, identity, and the politics of difference." *Cultural anthropology* 7.1 (1992): 6-23.
- Henken, Ted. "Balseros, boteros, and el bombo: Post-1994 Cuban immigration to the United States and the persistence of special treatment." *Latino Studies* 3.3 (2005): 393-416.
- Kiser, Edgar. "Comparing varieties of agency theory in economics, political science, and sociology: An illustration from state policy implementation." *Sociological Theory* 17.2 (1999): 146-170.
- Krogstad, Jens Manuel. "Puerto Ricans Leave in Record Numbers for Mainland U.S." *Pew Research Center*. N.p., 14 Oct. 2015. Web. 10 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/14/puerto-ricans-leave-in-record-numbers-for-mainland-u-s/>>.
- Kunstler, James H. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993. Print.
- Nackerud, Larry, et al. "The end of the Cuban contradiction in US refugee policy." *International Migration Review* (1999): 176-192.
- Ngai, Mae M. "The architecture of race in American immigration law: A reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924." *The Journal of American History* 86.1 (1999): 67-92.
- Nnaemeka, Obioma, ed. *The politics of (M) othering: Womanhood, identity and resistance in African literature*. Vol. 1. Routledge, 2005.

- Obejas, Achy. *We came all the way from Cuba so you could dress like this?: stories*. Cleis Press, 1994.
- Oboler, S., ed. *Latinos and Citizenship: The Dilemma of Belonging*. New York, US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Ong, Aihwa, et al. "Cultural citizenship as subject-making: immigrants negotiate racial and cultural boundaries in the United States [and comments and reply]." *Current anthropology* 37.5 (1996): 737-762.
- Pedraza, Silvia. "Assimilation or transnationalism? Conceptual models of the immigrant experience in America." *Cultural psychology of immigrants* (2006): 33-54.
- . "Cuba's refugees: Manifold migrations." *Cuban communism* 2003 (1959): 308-328.
- Pietri, Pedro. *Puerto Rican Obituary*. New York: Monthly Review, 1974. Print.
- Reeskens, Tim, and Marc Hooghe. "Beyond the civic-ethnic dichotomy: investigating the structure of citizenship concepts across thirty-three countries." *Nations and Nationalism* 16.4 (2010): 579-597.
- Rincón, Belinda Linn, and Suzanne Oboler. "Citizenship." *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*. Ed. Frances R. Aparicio and Suzanne Bost. London: Routledge, 2013. 133-42. Print.
- Rodríguez De Tió, Lola. "Mi Libro De Cuba." *Ciudad Seva*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Apr. 2017. <<http://ciudadseva.com/texto/mi-libro-de-cuba/>>.
- Rohrleitner, Marion. "Who We Are: Migration, Gender, and New Forms of Citizenship." *American Quarterly* 63.2 (2011): 419-429.
- Rosaldo, Renato. "Cultural citizenship and educational democracy." *Cultural anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 402-411.
- Rumford, Chris. "European civil society or transnational social space? Conceptions of society in discourses of EU citizenship, governance and the democratic deficit: An emerging agenda." *European Journal of Social Theory* 6.1 (2003): 25-43.
- Santeiro, Luis. "Citizenship." *¿Qué Pasa, U.S.A.?* 1978. *YouTube*. Web. 20 Mar. 2017. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ru6EIIDQ5RE>>.
- Schiffman, Richard. "How Cubans' Health Improved When Their Economy Collapsed." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 18 Apr. 2013. Web. 9 May 2017. <<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/04/how-cubans-health-improved-when-their-economy-collapsed/275080/>>.
- Shulman, Stephen. "Challenging the civic/ethnic and West/East dichotomies in the study of nationalism." *Comparative Political Studies* 35.5 (2002): 554-585.

- Smith, Rogers M. *Civic Ideals : Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*. Yale University Press, 1997. The Yale ISPS Series. EBSCOhost, proxy.library.oregonstate.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=53071&site=ehost-live.
- Stephen, Lynn. *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Duke University Press, 2007. Print.
- Suddath, Claire. "A brief history of US-Cuba relations." *Time*, April 15 (2009).
- Tilly, Charles. "Citizenship, identity and social history." *International review of social history* 40.S3 (1995): 1-17.
- Velez-Ibanez, Carlos G. *Border visions: Mexican cultures of the southwest United States*. University of Arizona Press, 1996. Print.
- Vertovec, Steven. "Transnationalism and identity." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies* 27.4 (2001): 573-582.
- Vink, Maarten Peter, Tijana Prokic-Breuer, and Jaap Dronkers. "Immigrant naturalization in the context of institutional diversity: policy matters, but to whom?." *International Migration* 51.5 (2013): 1-20.
- Weber, Greta. "Cuba's 'Peter Pans' Remember Childhood Exodus." *National Geographic*. National Geographic Society, 14 Aug. 2015. Web. 02 May 2017. <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/08/150814-cuba-operation-peter-pan-embassy-reopening-Castro/>>.
- Whalen, Carmen Teresa. "Colonialism, citizenship, and the making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: An introduction." *The Puerto Rican diaspora: historical perspectives* (2005): 1-42.



## APPENDIX A: WE CAME ALL THE WAY FROM CUBA SO YOU COULD DRESS LIKE THIS?

***We Came All the Way  
From Cuba So You Could  
Dress Like This?***

*for Nena*

I'm wearing a green sweater. It's made of some synthetic material, and it's mine. I've been wearing it for two days straight and have no plans to take it off right now.

I'm ten years old. I just got off the boat—or rather, the ship. The actual boat didn't make it: We got picked up halfway from Havana to Miami by a gigantic oil freighter to which they then tied our boat. That's how our boat got smashed to smithereens, its wooden planks breaking off like toothpicks against the ship's big metal hull. Everybody talks about American ingenuity, so I'm not sure why somebody didn't anticipate that would happen. But they didn't. So the boat that brought me and my parents most of the way from Cuba is now just part of the debris that'll wash up on tourist beaches all over the Caribbean.

As I speak, my parents are being interrogated by an official from the office of Immigration and Naturalization Services. It's all a formality because this is 1963, and no Cuban claiming political asylum actually gets turned away. We're evidence that the revolution has failed the middle class and that communism is bad. My parents—my father's an accountant and my mother's a social worker—are living, breathing examples of the suffering Cubans have endured under the tyranny of Fidel Castro.

The immigration officer, a fat Hungarian lady with sparkly hazel eyes and a perpetual smile, asks my parents why



they came over, and my father, whose face is bright red from spending two days floating in a little boat on the Atlantic Ocean while secretly terrified, points to me—I'm sitting on a couch across the room, more bored than exhausted—and says, We came for her, so she could have a future.

The immigration officer speaks a halting Spanish, and with it she tells my parents about fleeing the Communists in Hungary. She says they took everything from her family, including a large country estate, with forty-four acres and two lakes, that's now being used as a vocational training center. Can you imagine that, she says. There's an official presidential portrait of John F. Kennedy behind her, which will need to be replaced in a week or so.

I fold my arms in front of my chest and across the green sweater. Tonight the U.S. government will put us up in a noisy transient hotel. We'll be allowed to stay there at taxpayer expense for a couple of days until my godfather—who lives with his mistress somewhere in Miami—comes to get us.

■ ■ ■

Leaning against the wall at the processing center, I notice a volunteer for Catholic Charities who approaches me with gifts: oatmeal cookies, a plastic doll with blond hair and a blue dress, and a rosary made of white plastic beads. She smiles and talks to me in incomprehensible English, speaking unnaturally loud.

My mother, who's watching while sitting nervously next to my father as we're being processed, will later tell me she remembers this moment as something poignant and good.

All I hold onto is the feel of the doll—cool and hard—and the fact that the Catholic volunteer is trying to get me to exchange my green sweater for a little gray flannel gym jacket with a hood and an American flag logo. I wrap myself up tighter in the sweater, which at this point still smells of salt

114

and Cuban dirt and my grandmother's house, and the Catholic volunteer just squeezes my shoulder and leaves, thinking, I'm sure, that I've been traumatized by the trip across the choppy waters. My mother smiles weakly at me from across the room.

I'm still clutching the doll, a thing I'll never play with but which I'll carry with me all my life, from apartment to apartment, one move after the other. Eventually, her little blond nylon hairs will fall off and, thirty years later, after I'm diagnosed with cancer, she'll sit atop my dresser, scarred and bald like a chemo patient.

■ ■ ■

Is life destiny or determination?

For all the blond boyfriends I will have, there will be only two yellow-haired lovers. One doesn't really count—a boy in a military academy who subscribes to Republican politics like my parents, and who will try, relatively unsuccessfully, to penetrate me on a south Florida beach. I will squirm away from underneath him, not because his penis hurts me but because the stubble on his face burns my cheek.

The other will be Martha, perceived by the whole lesbian community as a gold digger, but who will love me in spite of my poverty. She'll come to my one-room studio on Saturday mornings when her rich lover is still asleep and rip tee-shirts off my shoulders, brutally and honestly.

One Saturday we'll forget to set the alarm to get her back home in time, and Martha will have to dress in a hurry, the smoky smell of my sex all over her face and her own underwear tangled up in her pants leg. When she gets home, her rich lover will notice the weird bulge at her calf and throw her out, forcing Martha to acknowledge that without a primary relationship for contrast, we can't go on.

115

It's too dangerous, she'll say, tossing her blond hair away from her face.

Years later, I'll visit Martha, now living seaside in Provincetown with her new lover, a Kennedy cousin still in the closet who has a love of dogs, and freckles sprinkled all over her cheeks.

■ ■ ■

At the processing center, the Catholic volunteer has found a young Colombian woman to talk to me. I don't know her name, but she's pretty and brown, and she speaks Spanish. She tells me she's not Catholic but that she'd like to offer me Christian comfort anyway. She smells of violet water.

She pulls a Bible from her big purse and asks me, Do you know this, and I say, I'm Catholic, and she says that, well, she was once Catholic, too, but then she was saved and became something else. She says everything will change for me in the United States, as it did for her.

Then she tells me about coming here with her father and how he got sick and died, and she was forced to do all sorts of work, including what she calls sinful work, and how the sinful work taught her so much about life, and then how she got saved. She says there's still a problem, an impulse, which she has to suppress by reading the Bible. She looks at me as if I know what she's talking about.

Across the room, my parents are still talking to the fat Hungarian lady, my father's head bent over the table as he fills out form after form.

Then the Catholic volunteer comes back and asks the Colombian girl something in English, and the girl reaches across me, pats my lap, and starts reading from her Spanish-language Bible: Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that feed upon the lilies. Until the day breathes and

the shadows flee, I will hie me to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. You are all fair, my love; there is no flaw in you.

■ ■ ■

Here's what my father dreams I will be in the United States of America: A lawyer, then a judge, in a system of law that is both serious and just. Not that he actually believes in democracy—in fact, he's openly suspicious of the popular will—but he longs for the power and prestige such a career would bring, and which he can't achieve on his own now that we're here, so he projects it all on me. He sees me in courtrooms and lecture halls, at libraries and in elegant restaurants, the object of envy and awe.

My father does not envision me in domestic scenes. He does not imagine me as a wife or mother because to do so would be to imagine someone else closer to me than he is, and he cannot endure that. He will never regret not being a grandfather; it was never part of his plan.

Here's what my mother dreams I will be in the United States of America: The owner of many appliances and a rolling green lawn; mother of two mischievous children; the wife of a boyishly handsome North American man who drinks Pepsi for breakfast; a career woman with a well-paying position in local broadcasting.

My mother pictures me reading the news on TV at four and home at the dinner table by six. She does not propose that I will actually do the cooking, but rather that I'll oversee the undocumented Haitian woman my husband and I have hired for that purpose. She sees me as fulfilled, as she imagines she is.

All I ever think about are kisses, not the deep throaty kind but quick pecks all along my belly just before my lover and I

dissolve into warm blankets and tangled sheets in a bed under an open window. I have no view of this scene from a distance, so I don't know if the window frames tall pine trees or tropical bushes permeated with skittering gray lizards.

■ ■ ■

It's hot and stuffy in the processing center, where I'm sitting under a light that buzzes and clicks. Everything smells of nicotine. I wipe the shine off my face with the sleeve of my sweater. Eventually, I take off the sweater and fold it over my arm.

My father, smoking cigarette after cigarette, mutters about communism and how the Dominican Republic is next and then, possibly, someplace in Central America.

My mother has disappeared to another floor in the building, where the Catholic volunteer insists that she look through boxes filled with clothes donated by generous North Americans. Later, my mother will tell us how the Catholic volunteer pointed to the little gray flannel gym jacket with the hood and the American flag logo, how she plucked a bow tie from a box, then a black synthetic teddy from another and laughed, embarrassed.

My mother will admit she was uncomfortable with the idea of sifting through the boxes, sinking arm-deep into other people's sweat and excretions, but not that she was afraid of offending the Catholic volunteer and that she held her breath, smiled, and fished out a shirt for my father and a light blue cotton dress for me, which we'll never wear.

■ ■ ■

My parents escaped from Cuba because they did not want me to grow up in a communist state. They are anti-communists, especially my father.

118

It's because of this that when Martin Luther King, Jr., dies in 1968 and North American cities go up in flames, my father will gloat. King was a Communist, he will say; he studied in Moscow, everybody knows that.

I'll roll my eyes and say nothing. My mother will ask him to please finish his *café con leche* and wipe the milk moustache from the top of his lip.

Later, the morning after Bobby Kennedy's brains are shot all over a California hotel kitchen, my father will greet the news of his death by walking into our kitchen wearing a "Nixon's the One" button.

There's no stopping him now, my father will say; I know, because I was involved with the counterrevolution, and I know he's the one who's going to save us, he's the one who came up with the Bay of Pigs—which would have worked, all the experts agree, if he'd been elected instead of Kennedy, that coward.

My mother will vote for Richard Nixon in 1968, but in spite of his loud support my father will sit out the election, convinced there's no need to become a citizen of the United States (the usual prerequisite for voting) because Nixon will get us back to Cuba in no time, where my father's dormant citizenship will spring to life.

Later that summer, my father, who has resisted getting a television set (too cumbersome to be moved when we go back to Cuba, he will tell us), suddenly buys a huge Zenith color model to watch the Olympics broadcast from Mexico City.

I will sit on the floor, close enough to distinguish the different colored dots, while my father sits a few feet away in a LA-Z-BOY chair and roots for the Cuban boxers, especially Teófilo Stevenson. Every time Stevenson wins one—whether against North Americans or East Germans or whomever—my father will jump up and shout.

Later, when the Cuban flag waves at us during the medal

119

ceremony, and the Cuban national anthem comes through the TV's tinny speakers, my father will stand up in Miami and cover his heart with his palm just like Fidel, watching on his own TV in Havana.

When I get older, I'll tell my father a rumor I heard that Stevenson, for all his heroics, practiced his best boxing moves on his wife, and my father will look at me like I'm crazy and say, Yeah, well, he's a Communist, what did you expect, huh?

• • •

In the processing center, my father is visited by a Cuban man with a large camera bag and a steno notebook into which he's constantly scribbling. The man has green Coke-bottle glasses and chews on a pungent Cuban cigar as he nods at everything my father says.

My mother, holding a brown paper bag filled with our new (used) clothes, sits next to me on the couch under the buzzing and clicking lights. She asks me about the Colombian girl, and I tell her she read me parts of the Bible, which makes my mother shudder.

The man with the Coke-bottle glasses and cigar tells my father he's from Santiago de Cuba in Oriente province, near Fidel's hometown, where he claims nobody ever supported the revolution because they knew the real Fidel. Then he tells my father he knew his father, which makes my father very nervous.

The whole northern coast of Havana harbor is mined, my father says to the Cuban man as if to distract him. There are *milicianos* all over the beaches, he goes on; it was a miracle we got out, but we had to do it—for her, and he points my way again.

Then the man with the Coke-bottle glasses and cigar jumps up and pulls a giant camera out of his bag, covering my mother and me with a sudden explosion of light.

120

• • •

In 1971, I'll come home for Thanksgiving from Indiana University where I have a scholarship to study optometry. It'll be the first time in months I'll be without an antiwar demonstration to go to, a consciousness-raising group to attend, or a Gay Liberation meeting to lead.

*Alaba'o*, I almost didn't recognize you, my mother will say, pulling on the fringes of my suede jacket, promising to mend the holes in my floor-sweeping bell-bottom jeans. My green sweater will be somewhere in the closet of my bedroom in their house.

We left Cuba so you could dress like this? my father will ask over my mother's shoulder.

And for the first and only time in my life, I'll say, Look, you didn't come for me, you came for you; you came because all your rich clients were leaving, and you were going to wind up a cashier in your father's hardware store if you didn't leave, okay?

My father, who works in a bank now, will gasp—*¿Qué qué?*—and step back a bit. And my mother will say, Please, don't talk to your father like that.

And I'll say, It's a free country, I can do anything I want, remember? Christ, he only left because Fidel beat him in that stupid swimming race when they were little.

And then my father will reach over my mother's thin shoulders, grab me by the red bandanna around my neck, and throw me to the floor, where he'll kick me over and over until all I remember is my mother's voice pleading, Please stop, please, please, please stop.

• • •

121

We leave the processing center with the fat Hungarian lady, who drives a large Ford station wagon. My father sits in the front with her, and my mother and I sit in the back, although there is plenty of room for both of us in the front as well. The fat Hungarian lady is taking us to our hotel, where our room will have a kitchenette and a view of an alley from which a tall black transvestite plies her night trade.

Eventually, I'm drawn by the lights of the city, not just the neon streaming by the car windows but also the white globes on the street lamps, and I scamper to the back where I can watch the lights by myself. I close my eyes tight, then open them, loving the tracers and star bursts on my private screen.

Up in front, the fat Hungarian lady and my father are discussing the United States' many betrayals, first of Eastern Europe after World War II, then of Cuba after the Bay of Pigs invasion.

My mother, whom I believe is as beautiful as any of the palm trees fluttering on the median strip as we drive by, leans her head against the car window, tired and bereft. She comes to when the fat Hungarian lady, in a fit of giggles, breaks from the road and into the parking lot of a supermarket so shrouded in light that I'm sure it's a flying saucer docked here in Miami.

We did this when we first came to America, the fat Hungarian lady says, leading us up to the supermarket. And it's something only people like us can appreciate.

My father bobs his head up and down and my mother follows, her feet scraping the ground as she drags me by the hand.

We walk through the front door and then a turnstile, and suddenly we are in the land of plenty—row upon row of cereal boxes, TV dinners, massive displays of fresh pineapple, crate after crate of oranges, shelves of insect repellent, and every kind of broom. The dairy section is jammed with cheese and chocolate milk.

There's a butcher shop in the back, and my father says, Oh my god, look, and points to a slab of bloody red ribs thick with meat. My god my god my god, he says, as if he's never seen such a thing, or as if we're on the verge of starvation.

Calm down, please, my mother says, but he's not listening, choking back tears and hanging off the fat Hungarian lady who's now walking him past the sausages and hot dogs, packaged bologna and chipped beef.

All around us people stare, but then my father says, We just arrived from Cuba, and there's so much here!

The fat Hungarian lady pats his shoulder and says to the gathering crowd, Yes, he came on a little boat with his whole family; look at his beautiful daughter who will now grow up well-fed and free.

I push up against my mother, who feels as smooth and thin as a palm leaf on Good Friday. My father beams at me, tears in his eyes. All the while, complete strangers congratulate him on his wisdom and courage, give him hugs and money, and welcome him to the United States.

■ ■ ■

There are things that can't be told.

Things like when we couldn't find an apartment, everyone's saying it was because landlords in Miami didn't rent to families with kids, but knowing, always, that it was more than that.

Things like my doing very poorly on an IQ test because I didn't speak English, and getting tossed into a special education track, where it took until high school before somebody realized I didn't belong there.

Things like a North American hairdresser's telling my mother she didn't do her kind of hair.

Like my father, finally realizing he wasn't going to go back

to Cuba anytime soon, trying to hang himself with the light cord in the bathroom while my mother cleaned rooms at a nearby luxury hotel, but falling instead and breaking his arm.

Like accepting welfare checks, because there really was no other way.

Like knowing that giving money to exile groups often meant helping somebody buy a private yacht for Caribbean vacations, not for invading Cuba, but also knowing that refusing to donate only invited questions about our own patriotism.

And knowing that Nixon really wasn't the one, and wasn't doing anything, and wouldn't have done anything, even if he'd finished his second term, no matter what a good job the Cuban burglars might have done at the Watergate Hotel.

• • •

What if we'd stayed? What if we'd never left Cuba? What if we were there when the last of the counterrevolution was beaten, or when Mariel harbor leaked thousands of Cubans out of the island, or when the Pan-American Games came? What if we'd never left?

All my life, my father will say I would have been a young Communist, falling prey to the revolution's propaganda. According to him, I would have believed ice cream treats came from Fidel, that those hairless Russians were our friends, and that my duty as a revolutionary was to turn him in for his counterrevolutionary activities—which he will swear he'd never have given up if we'd stayed in Cuba.

My mother will shake her head but won't contradict him. She'll say the revolution uses people, and that I, too, would probably have been used, then betrayed, and that we'll never know, but maybe I would have wound up in jail whether I ever believed in the revolution or not, because I

124

would have talked back to the wrong person, me and my big mouth.

I wonder, if we'd stayed then who, if anyone—if not Martha and the boy from the military academy—would have been my blond lovers, or any kind of lovers at all.

• • •

And what if we'd stayed, and there had been no revolution?

My parents will never say, as if somehow they know that their lives were meant to exist only in opposition.

I try to imagine who I would have been if Fidel had never come into Havana sitting triumphantly on top of that tank, but I can't. I can only think of variations of who I am, not who I might have been.

In college one day, I'll tell my mother on the phone that I want to go back to Cuba to see, to consider all these questions, and she'll pause, then say, What for? There's nothing there for you, we'll tell you whatever you need to know, don't you trust us?

Over my dead body, my father will say, listening in on the other line.

Years later, when I fly to Washington, D.C., and take a cab straight to the Cuban Interests Section to apply for a visa, a golden-skinned man with the dulled eyes of a bureaucrat will tell me that because I came to the U.S. too young to make the decision to leave for myself—that it was in fact my parents who made it for me—the Cuban government does not recognize my U.S. citizenship.

You need to renew your Cuban passport, he will say. Perhaps your parents have it, or a copy of your birth certificate, or maybe you have a relative or friend who could go through the records in Cuba for you.

I'll remember the passport among my mother's priceless

125

papers, handwritten in blue ink, even the official parts. But when I ask my parents for it, my mother will say nothing, and my father will say, It's not here anymore, but in a bank box, where you'll never see it. Do you think I would let you betray us like that?

■ ■ ■

The boy from the military academy will say oh baby baby as he grinds his hips into me. And Martha and all the girls before and after her here in the United States will say ooohhh oooooohhhh as my fingers explore inside them.

But the first time I make love with a Cuban, a politically controversial exile writer of some repute, she will say, *Aaaaaayyyyyyaaaaayyyyyyaaaaay* and lift me by my hair from between her legs, strings of saliva like sea foam between my mouth and her shiny curls. Then she'll drop me onto her mouth where our tongues will poke each other like wily porpoises.

In one swift movement, she'll flip me on my back, pillows falling every which way from the bed, and kiss every part of me, between my breasts and under my arms, and she'll suck my fingertips, and the inside of my elbows. And when she rests her head on my belly, her ear listening not to my heartbeat but to the fluttering of palm trees, she'll sit up, place one hand on my throat, the other on my sex, and kiss me there, under my rib cage, around my navel, where I am softest and palest.

The next morning, listening to her breathing in my arms, I will wonder how this could have happened, and if it would have happened at all if we'd stayed in Cuba. And if so, if it would have been furtive or free, with or without the revolution. And how—knowing now how cataclysmic life really is—I might hold on to her for a little while longer.

126

■ ■ ■

When my father dies of a heart attack in 1990 (it will happen while he's driving, yelling at somebody, and the car will just sail over to the sidewalk and stop dead at the curb, where he'll fall to the seat and his arms will somehow fold over his chest, his hands set in prayer), I will come home to Florida from Chicago, where I'll be working as a photographer for the *Tribune*. I won't be taking pictures of murder scenes or politicians then but rather rock stars and local performance artists.

I'll be living in Uptown, in a huge house with a dry dark-room in one of the bedrooms, now converted and sealed black, where I cut up negatives and create photomontages that are exhibited at the Whitney Biennial and hailed by the critics as filled with yearning and hope.

When my father dies, I will feel sadness and a wish that certain things had been said, but I will not want more time with him. I will worry about my mother, just like all the relatives who predict she will die of heartbreak within months (she has diabetes and her vision is failing). But she will instead outlive both him and me.

I'll get to Miami Beach, where they've lived in a little coach house off Collins Avenue since their retirement, and find cousins and aunts helping my mother go through insurance papers and bank records, my father's will, his photographs and mementos: his university degree, a faded list of things to take back to Cuba (including Christmas lights), a jaundiced clipping from *Diario de las Américas* about our arrival which quotes my father as saying that Havana harbor is mined, and a photo of my mother and me, wide-eyed and thin, sitting on the couch in the processing center.

My father's funeral will be simple but well-attended,

127

closed casket at my request, but with a moment reserved for those who want a last look. My mother will stay in the room while the box is pried open (I'll be in the lobby smoking a cigarette, a habit I despised in my father but which I'll pick up at his funeral) and tell me later she stared at the cross above the casket, never registering my father's talcumed and perfumed body beneath it.

I couldn't leave, it wouldn't have looked right, she'll say. But thank god I'm going blind.

Then a minister who we do not know will come and read from the Bible and my mother will reach around my waist and hold onto me as we listen to him say, When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse...and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice...with all your heart and with all your soul; then the Lord your God will return your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

■ ■ ■

There will be a storm during my father's burial, which means it will end quickly. My mother and several relatives will go back to her house, where a TV will blare from the bedroom filled with bored teenage cousins, the women will talk about how to make *picadillo* with low-fat ground turkey instead of the traditional beef and ham, and the men will sit outside in the yard, drinking beer or small cups of Cuban coffee, and talk about my father's love of Cuba, and how unfortunate it is that he died just as Eastern Europe is breaking free, and Fidel is surely about to fall.

Three days later, after taking my mother to the movies

128

and the mall, church and the local Social Security office, I'll be standing at the front gate with my bags, yelling at the cab driver that I'm coming, when my mother will ask me to wait a minute and run back into the house, emerging minutes later with a box for me that won't fit in any of my bags.

A few things, she'll say, a few things that belong to you that I've been meaning to give you for years and now, well, they're yours.

I'll shake the box, which will emit only a muffled sound, and thank her for whatever it is, hug her and kiss her and tell her I'll call her as soon as I get home. She'll put her chicken bone arms around my neck, kiss the skin there all the way to my shoulders, and get choked up, which will break my heart.

Sleepy and tired in the cab to the airport, I'll lean my head against the window and stare out at the lanky palm trees, their brown and green leaves waving good-bye to me through the still coming drizzle. Everything will be damp, and I'll be hot and stuffy, listening to car horns detonating on every side of me. I'll close my eyes, stare at the blackness, and try to imagine something of yearning and hope, but I'll fall asleep instead, waking only when the driver tells me we've arrived, and that he'll get my bags from the trunk, his hand outstretched for the tip as if it were a condition for the return of my things.

When I get home to Uptown I'll forget all about my mother's box until one day many months later when my memory's fuzzy enough to let me be curious. I'll break it open to find grade school report cards, family pictures of the three of us in Cuba, a love letter to her from my father (in which he talks about wanting to kiss the tender mole by her mouth), Xeroxes of my birth certificate, copies of our requests for political asylum, and my faded blue-ink Cuban passport (expiration date: June 1965), all wrapped up in my old green sweater.

129

When I call my mother—embarrassed about taking so long to unpack her box, overwhelmed by the treasures within it—her answering machine will pick up and, in a bilingual message, give out her beeper number in case of emergency.

A week after my father's death, my mother will buy a computer with a Braille keyboard and a speaker, start learning how to use it at the community center down the block, and be busy investing in mutual funds at a profit within six months.

■ ■ ■

But this is all a long way off, of course. Right now, we're in a small hotel room with a kitchenette that U.S. taxpayers have provided for us.

My mother, whose eyes are dark and sunken, sits at a little table eating one of the Royal Castle hamburgers the fat Hungarian lady bought for us. My father munches on another, napkins spread under his hands. Their heads are tilted toward the window which faces an alley. To the far south edge, it offers a view of Biscayne Boulevard and a magically colored thread of night traffic. The air is salty and familiar, the moon brilliant hanging in the sky.

I'm in bed, under sheets that feel heavy with humidity and the smell of cleaning agents. The plastic doll the Catholic volunteer gave me sits on my pillow.

Then my father reaches across the table to my mother and says, We made it, we really made it.

And my mother runs her fingers through his hair and nods, and they both start crying, quietly but heartily, holding and stroking each other as if they are all they have.

And then there's a noise—a screech out in the alley followed by what sounds like a hyena's laughter—and my father leaps up and looks out the window, then starts laughing, too.

Oh my god, come here, look at this, he beckons to my

130

mother, who jumps up and goes to him, positioning herself right under the crook of his arm. Can you believe that, he says.

Only in America, echoes my mother.

And as I lie here wondering about the spectacle outside the window and the new world that awaits us on this and every night of the rest of our lives, even I know we've already come a long way. What none of us can measure yet is how much of the voyage is already behind us.

131

## APPENDIX B: PUERTO RICAN OBITUARY

**Puerto Rican Obituary by Pedro Pietri**

They worked  
 They were always on time  
 They were never late  
 They never spoke back  
 when they were insulted  
 They worked  
 They never took days off  
 that were not on the calendar  
 They never went on strike  
 without permission  
 They worked  
 ten days a week  
 and were only paid for five  
 They worked  
 They worked  
 They worked  
 and they died  
 They died broke  
 They died owing  
 They died never knowing  
 what the front entrance  
 of the first national city bank looks like

Juan  
 Miguel  
 Milagros  
 Olga  
 Manuel  
 All died yesterday today  
 and will die again tomorrow  
 passing their bill collectors  
 on to the next of kin  
 All died  
 waiting for the garden of eden  
 to open up again  
 under a new management  
 All died  
 dreaming about america  
 waking them up in the middle of the night

screaming: Mira Mira  
 your name is on the winning lottery ticket  
 for one hundred thousand dollars  
 All died  
 hating the grocery stores  
 that sold them make-believe steak  
 and bullet-proof rice and beans  
 All died waiting dreaming and hating

Dead Puerto Ricans  
 Who never knew they were Puerto Ricans  
 Who never took a coffee break  
 from the ten commandments  
 to KILL KILL KILL  
 the landlords of their cracked skulls  
 and communicate with their latino souls

Juan  
 Miguel  
 Milagros  
 Olga  
 Manuel  
 From the nervous breakdown streets  
 where the mice live like millionaires  
 and the people do not live at all  
 are dead and were never alive

Juan  
 died waiting for his number to hit  
 Miguel  
 died waiting for the welfare check  
 to come and go and come again  
 Milagros  
 died waiting for her ten children  
 to grow up and work  
 so she could quit working  
 Olga  
 died waiting for a five dollar raise  
 Manuel  
 died waiting for his supervisor to drop dead  
 so he could get a promotion

Is a long ride  
 from Spanish Harlem  
 to long island cemetery

where they were buried  
 First the train  
 and then the bus  
 and the cold cuts for lunch  
 and the flowers  
 that will be stolen  
 when visiting hours are over  
 Is very expensive  
 Is very expensive  
 But they understand  
 Their parents understood  
 Is a long non-profit ride  
 from Spanish Harlem  
 to long island cemetery

Juan  
 Miguel  
 Milagros  
 Olga  
 Manuel  
 All died yesterday today  
 and will die again tomorrow  
 Dreaming  
 Dreaming about queens  
 Clean-cut lily-white neighborhood  
 Puerto Ricanless scene  
 Thirty-thousand-dollar home  
 The first spics on the block  
 Proud to belong to a community  
 of gringos who want them lynched  
 Proud to be a long distance away  
 from the sacred phrase: Que Pasa

These dreams  
 These empty dreams  
 from the make-believe bedrooms  
 their parents left them  
 are the after-effects  
 of television programs  
 about the ideal  
 white american family  
 with black maids  
 and latino janitors  
 who are well train

to make everyone  
 and their bill collectors  
 laugh at them  
 and the people they represent

Juan  
 died dreaming about a new car  
 Miguel  
 died dreaming about new anti-poverty programs  
 Milagros  
 died dreaming about a trip to Puerto Rico  
 Olga  
 died dreaming about real jewelry  
 Manuel  
 died dreaming about the irish sweepstakes

They all died  
 like a hero sandwich dies  
 in the garment district  
 at twelve o'clock in the afternoon  
 social security number to ashes  
 union dues to dust

They knew  
 they were born to weep  
 and keep the morticians employed  
 as long as they pledge allegiance  
 to the flag that wants them destroyed  
 They saw their names listed  
 in the telephone directory of destruction  
 They were train to turn  
 the other cheek by newspapers  
 that misspelled mispronounced  
 and misunderstood their names  
 and celebrated when death came  
 and stole their final laundry ticket

They were born dead  
 and they died dead

Is time  
 to visit sister lopez again  
 the number one healer  
 and fortune card dealer  
 in Spanish Harlem

She can communicate  
 with your late relatives  
 for a reasonable fee  
 Good news is guaranteed

Rise Table Rise Table  
 death is not dumb and disable  
 Those who love you want to know  
 the correct number to play  
 Let them know this right away  
 Rise Table Rise Table  
 death is not dumb and disable  
 Now that your problems are over  
 and the world is off your shoulders  
 help those who you left behind  
 find financial peace of mind

Rise Table Rise Table  
 death is not dumb and disable  
 If the right number we hit  
 all our problems will split  
 and we will visit your grave  
 on every legal holiday

Those who love you want to know  
 the correct number to play  
 let them know this right away  
 We know your spirit is able  
 Death is not dumb and disable  
 RISE TABLE RISE TABLE

Juan  
 Miguel  
 Milagros  
 Olga  
 Manuel  
 All died yesterday today  
 and will die again tomorrow  
 Hating fighting and stealing  
 broken windows from each other  
 Practicing a religion without a roof  
 The old testament  
 The new testament  
 according to the gospel  
 of the internal revenue

the judge and jury and executioner  
protector and eternal bill collector

Secondhand shit for sale  
learn how to say Como Esta Usted  
and you will make a fortune  
They are dead  
They are dead  
and will not return from the dead  
until they stop neglecting  
the art of their dialogue  
for broken english lessons  
to impress the mister goldsteins  
who keep them employed  
as lavaplatos porters messenger boys  
factory workers maids stock clerks  
shipping clerks assistant mailroom  
assistant, assistant assistant  
to the assistant's assistant  
assistant lavaplatos and automatic  
artificial smiling doormen  
for the lowest wages of the ages  
and rages when you demand a raise  
because is against the company policy  
to promote SPICS SPICS SPICS

Juan  
died hating Miguel because Miguel's  
used car was in better running condition  
than his used car  
Miguel  
died hating Milagros because Milagros  
had a color television set  
and he could not afford one yet  
Milagros  
died hating Olga because Olga  
made five dollars more on the same job  
Olga  
died hating Manuel because Manuel  
had hit the numbers more times  
than she had hit the numbers  
Manuel  
died hating all of them  
Juan

Miguel  
 Milagros  
 and Olga  
 because they all spoke broken english  
 more fluently than he did

And now they are together  
 in the main lobby of the void  
 Addicted to silence  
 Off limits to the wind  
 Confine to worm supremacy  
 in long island cemetery  
 This is the groovy hereafter  
 the protestant collection box  
 was talking so loud and proud about

Here lies Juan  
 Here lies Miguel  
 Here lies Milagros  
 Here lies Olga  
 Here lies Manuel  
 who died yesterday today  
 and will die again tomorrow  
 Always broke  
 Always owing  
 Never knowing  
 that they are beautiful people

Never knowing  
 the geography of their complexion

PUERTO RICO IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE  
 PUERTORRIQUENOS ARE A BEAUTIFUL RACE

If only they  
 had turned off the television  
 and tune into their own imaginations  
 If only they  
 had used the white supremacy bibles  
 for toilet paper purpose  
 and make their latino souls  
 the only religion of their race  
 If only they  
 had return to the definition of the sun  
 after the first mental snowstorm

on the summer of their senses  
If only they  
had kept their eyes open  
at the funeral of their fellow employees  
who came to this country to make a fortune  
and were buried without underwears

Juan

Miguel

Milagros

Olga

Manuel

will right now be doing their own thing  
where beautiful people sing  
and dance and work together  
where the wind is a stranger  
to miserable weather conditions  
where you do not need a dictionary  
to communicate with your people  
Aqui Se Habla Espanol all the time  
Aqui you salute your flag first  
Aqui there are no dial soap commercials  
Aqui everybody smells good  
Aqui tv dinners do not have a future  
Aqui the men and women admire desire  
and never get tired of each other  
Aqui Que Paso Power is what's happening  
Aqui to be called negrito  
means to be called LOVE