

ArMS 1976.001
4 manuscript boxes, 2 cubic feet

Records of
Puerto Rican Oral History Project, 1960-1984
(Bulk dates, 1973-1975)

Brooklyn Historical Society
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Abstract

The Long Island Historical Society initiated the Puerto Rican Oral History Project in 1973. Using funding from the New York State Council on the Arts, over seventy-five interviews were conducted documenting the experiences of Brooklyn residents who arrived from Puerto Rico between 1917 and 1940. This collection includes recordings and transcripts of interviews conducted primarily between 1973 and 1975. Also included are newspaper clippings, brochures, booklets about Brooklyn's Puerto Rican community, and administrative information on how the project was developed, carried out, and evaluated.

Provenance

Materials contained in this collection were generated through the efforts of the Long Island Historical Society.

Administrative History

The Puerto Rican Oral History Project began with grant funding from the New York State Council on the Arts. Awarded in 1973, the purpose of the grant was to conduct interviews with Puerto Ricans who settled in Brooklyn between 1917 and 1940. Sixty-nine individuals were interviewed as part of the original scope of the project with each individual assigned a number identifier from 1 to 69. The number of participants later expanded due to the continued interest of project interviewer John Vazquez. Mr. Vazquez, the Director of the Department of Puerto Rican Studies at New York City Community College (NYCCC), taught an oral history course in the Spring of 1975 that required his students to interview Puerto Rican residents of Brooklyn: these interviews are also included in the collection.

Of the original sixty-nine interviews, nine were conducted between April and August 1973 before the project was shelved until 1974. The 1973 interviews were usually conducted in paired teams by Elba Correa, Mayda Cortiella, Pedro Rivera, Tomas Rivera, [Mr.] Torres, and [Mr.] Ruiz. Other than their names, no further information is available on these interviewers, and their relationship to LIHS is unknown. When the project was picked back up again in January, it had difficulty retaining staff. Project coordinator Anthony Cucchiara hired two college students to conduct interviews. These students left the project after one month having conducted only one interview. Next hired was Roberto Rosado, an instructor at NYCCC. Mr. Rosado was able to carry out two interviews before leaving the project in May 1974. In June, another instructor from NYCCC, Monte Rivera, joined the project and conducted seven interviews before leaving at the end of the month. A new hiring search produced Jaime Barreto, a Brooklyn Public School Coordinator. Mr. Barreto was joined by John Vazquez in August, and individually, the two conducted the remaining fifty interviews that comprised the project's original scope.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish, English, or both. In 1974, Maria C. Ramos and William Santos were hired to transcribe and translate interviews. These transcriptions are handwritten. Additional interview transcriptions come from a typed series which were done by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College when the interview tapes were on loan to that institution in 1984. Typed transcripts are in the language of the interview, without English translation. There is some overlap between handwritten transcriptions done by Ramos and Santos and those from the Hunter series resulting in interviews with multiple transcripts attached to them.

Of the interviews done as part of Mr. Vazquez's course at NYCCC, three participants carried over from the original sixty-nine. Transcripts of two interviews from this group were possibly made as a result of the loan to Hunter College. Besides these two transcripts the rest of the interviews recorded for Mr. Vazquez's course are not transcribed.

For specific information on language and availability of transcription for individual interviews, please see the Index file in Box 1.

Scope and Content

The collection contains transcripts for sixty-four interviews, printed ephemera including newspaper clippings, brochures, booklets, and administrative materials. The collection is arranged thematically into three series: 1) Transcripts, 1973-1975, 1983, 2) Puerto Rican Community, 1960-1983, and 3) Administrative materials, 1968-1984. Interview recordings were originally made on compact cassette tapes and are housed separately.

Series I: Transcripts, 1973-1975, 1983 makes up the bulk of the collection. There are transcripts for fifty-nine of the sixty-nine original participants and an additional five transcripts from interviews conducted outside the original scope of the project. For a complete listing about translations, participants, and dates of the interview, please see the Index file in this series. Abstracts of the interviews conducted with the original sixty-nine are also included in this series. Folders are organized according to the project number assigned to each narrator. Each folder contains all available transcripts for that interview.

See separate appendix for inventory of recordings

Series II: Puerto Rican Community, 1960-1983 consists of printed ephemera related to the Puerto Rican Community. Items include brochures, booklets, and fliers for Puerto Rican Studies programs at academic and cultural institutions in the New York City area and in Puerto Rico. Newspaper clippings in this series are divided into those focusing on New York's Puerto Rican community and press on LIHS's Puerto Rican Oral History Project. This series also includes a booklet published in English and Spanish entitled "Danger in Puerto Rico." The work is by Ramon Colon, one of the original sixty-nine interviewed for the project.

Series III: Administrative materials, 1968-1984 includes all retained materials that went into the funding and implementation of the project. Several folders in this series are devoted to information about the project's participants. Interviewer John Vazquez created critique forms for all the sixty-nine original participants. Those worksheets and any background information material collected on narrators are included here and organized according to the project number assigned to the individual. Background information on those narrators outside the original scope of the project are filed together and arranged alphabetically. These materials were most likely generated as part of course taught by Mr. Vazquez at New York City Community College. Any information worksheets filled out on individuals who were not interviewed are filed separately. Also found in this series is information on project personnel, financing, and other oral history projects. A file of project reports consists of updates from three different perspectives: project coordinator Anthony Cucchiara, interviewer John Vazquez, and student worker Julio Gonzalez.

System of Arrangement

Transcripts in Series I are arranged according to the original project number assigned to each narrator. Those transcripts outside the original project are in chronological and alphabetical order. Folders in Series II and III are arranged chronologically and thematically when appropriate.

Conditions of Access and Use

Brooklyn Historical Society archives and manuscripts must be examined on site. Appointments to examine archives and manuscript materials must be made in advance by contacting the Archivist through e-mail at archivist@brooklynhistory.org. For access to interview recordings please e-mail Sadie Sullivan, the Oral Historian, at ssullivan@brooklynhistory.org. Please contact the Brooklyn Historical Society to learn of any additional conditions of access and use.

Preferred Citation

Item name. Puerto Rican Oral History Project, ArMs 1976.001, Brooklyn Historical Society.

Language of Materials

Materials are in English and Spanish.

Related Material

Hispanic Communities Documentation Project, ArMs 1989.004

Access Points

Personal names:

Colon, Jesus
Cruz, Celia
Dennis, Antonia
Grevi, Santiago
Kelly, James
Tapia, Carlos
Weber, Louis

Corporate names:

Hunter College--Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos
El Diario
El Museo del Barrio
International Ladies Garment Workers Union
La Prensa
Long Island University
New York City Community College--Puerto Rican and Latin Studies Program
New York City Public Schools
Pfizer Inc.
Puerto Rican Baseball League
Puerto Rican Civic Organization
Puerto Rican Merchants Association

Puerto Rican Writers Association
Universidad de Puerto Rico

Topical subjects:

Armed forces.
Citizenship--New York(State)--New York.
Factories--New York(State).
Great Depression, 1929.
Immigration to the United States.
Korean War, 1950-1953.
Local transit--New York(State)--New York.
Parades--New York (State)--New York.
Political clubs--New York(State)--New York.
Puerto Rican experience.
Puerto Rican families--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Rican poetry.
Puerto Rican studies.
Puerto Rican women.
Puerto Rican women--Employment--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Rican women--New York (State)--New York--Political activity.
Puerto Rican women--New York (State)--New York--Social conditions.
Puerto Rican youth.
Puerto Rican youth--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Ricans.
Puerto Ricans--Cultural assimilation--United States.
Puerto Ricans--Education--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Ricans--Employment--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Ricans--Health and hygiene--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Ricans--Housing--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Economic conditions.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Ethnic identity.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--History--20th century.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Intellectual life.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Language.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Music.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Newspapers.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Politics and government--20th century.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York Region--Religion.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Social conditions--20th century.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Social life and customs--20th century.
Puerto Ricans--New York (State)--New York--Societies, etc.
Puerto Ricans--Poetry.
Puerto Ricans--Race identity.
Race discrimination--New York (State)--New York.
Race relations--United States.
Racism--New York (State)--New York.
Transportation.

Wages – New York (State)--New York.
 World War, 1914-1918.
 World War, 1939-1945.
 Work environment--Puerto Rico.
 Work environment--United States.

Geographic subjects:

Astoria (New York, N.Y)
 Bay Ridge (New York, N.Y.)
 Bronx (New York, N.Y.)
 Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
 Bushwick (New York, N.Y.)
 Cobble Hill (New York, N.Y.)
 Flatbush (New York, N.Y.)
 Flushing (New York, N.Y.)
 Fort Greene (New York, N.Y.)
 Manhattan (New York, N.Y)
 Ponce (P.R.)
 Puerto Rico
 Red Hook (New York, N.Y.)
 San Juan (P.R)
 San Lorenzo (P.R.)
 San Tulce (P.R.)
 South America
 Staten Island (New York, N.Y.)
 Sunset Park (New York, N.Y.)
 Williamsburg (New York, NY)

Container List

Series 1: Transcripts, 1973-1975, 1983

| <u>Box</u> | <u>Folder Title</u> | | <u>Dates</u> |
|------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Abstracts of Transcripts | undated |
| | 2 | Indices of Transcripts | undated |
| | 3 | P.R.O.H.01 Ramon Colon | [English] 1973 |
| | 4 | P.R.O.H.02 Celia M. Vice | [English] 1973 |
| | 5 | P.R.O.H.03 Sister Carmelita Bonilla | [English] 1973 |
| | 6 | P.R.O.H.04 Julio Ferrell | [Spanish] 1973 |
| | 7 | P.R.O.H.05 Juana Weber Rodriguez | [Spanish] 1974 |
| | 8 | P.R.O.H.06 Gloria Tejada P.R.O.H.07 Josphine Festa P.R.O.H.08 Vicente Luis Marreo | [English and Spanish] 1974 |
| | 9 | P.R.O.H.09 Juan Ramos | [Spanish] 1973 |
| | 10 | P.R.O.H.10 Ramon Rodriques | [Spanish] 1974 |

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|---|----|--|-----------------------|------|
| | 11 | P.R.O.H.11 Gilbert Mongtignier | [English] | 1974 |
| | 12 | P.R.O.H.12 Nereida Marti | [English and Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 13 | P.R.O.H.13 Maximina Garden | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 14 | P.R.O.H.14 Mercedes Diaz P.R.O.H.15 Jovita Maisonet | [English and Spanish} | 1974 |
| | 15 | P.R.O.H.16 Rafaela Simmons | [Spanish} | 1974 |
| | 16 | P.R.O.H.17 Justina Bermudez | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 17 | P.R.O.H.18 Felix Loperena | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 18 | P.R.O.H.19 Clemente Torres | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 19 | P.R.O.H.20 Ramon Acosta | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 20 | P.R.O.H.21 Flora Acosta | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 21 | P.R.O.H.22 Orlando Malabe | [English] | 1974 |
| | 22 | P.R.O.H.23 Mildred Mulero | [English translation] | 1974 |
| | 23 | P.R.O.H.24 Maria Rodriguez | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| 2 | 24 | P.R.O.H.25 Pedro M. Rodriguez | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 25 | P.R.O.H.26 Gonzalo Plasencia | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 26 | P.R.O.H.27 Francisco Pratts | [English] | 1974 |
| | 27 | P.R.O.H.28 Pastor de Jesus | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 28 | P.R.O.H.29 Honorina Weber Irizarry | [English] | 1974 |
| | 29 | P.R.O.H.30 Rosario Figueros | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 30 | P.R.O.H.31 Angel Melendez | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 31 | P.R.O.H.32 Georgina Santiago | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 32 | P.R.O.H.33 Dicky Larregui | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 33 | P.R.O.H.34 Cecilio Rivera | [Spanish and English] | 1974 |
| | 34 | P.R.O.H.35 Juan Vazquez, Sr. | [English] | 1974 |
| | 35 | P.R.O.H.36 Encarnacion Armas | [English] | 1974 |
| | 36 | P.R.O.H.37 Cesar Donnes | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 37 | P.R.O.H.38 Magdalena Carrasquillo | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 38 | P.R.O.H.39 Betty Villa | [English] | 1974 |

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|---|----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| | 39 | P.R.O.H.40 Nick Perez | [English] | 1974 |
| | 40 | P.R.O.H.41 Olga Torres | [English] | 1974 |
| | 41 | P.R.O.H.42 Santiago Fontanez-Soto | [English] | 1974 |
| | 42 | P.R.O.H.43 Filomena Melendez | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 43 | P.R.O.H.44 Felipe Medina | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 44 | P.R.O.H.45 Sophie Negron | [English and Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 45 | P.R.O.H.46 Elizabeth Guanill | [English] | 1974 |
| | 46 | P.R.O.H.47 Pedro Guanill | [English] | 1974 |
| | 47 | P.R.O.H.48 Carolina Valazquez | [English and Spanish] | 1973 |
| | 48 | P.R.O.H.50 Trina Ally | [English] | 1973 |
| | 49 | P.R.O.H.51 Peter Mercado | [English] | 1974 |
| | 50 | P.R.O.H.52 Luis Hernandez | [English] | 1974 |
| 3 | 51 | P.R.O.H.55 Gumercindo Martinez | [English translation] | 1974 |
| | 52 | P.R.O.H.60 Ester Mercado Cortes | [Spanish] | 1973 |
| | 53 | P.R.O.H.61 Julio Espeta | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 54 | P.R.O.H.62 Maria Fortun | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 55 | P.R.O.H.64 Ernesto Sepulveda | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 56 | P.R.O.H.65 Jose Ramon Giboyeaux | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 57 | P.R.O.H.66 Magda Acosta | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 58 | P.R.O.H.67 Julio Hernandez | [Spanish] | 1974 |
| | 59 | Pedro Cresente | [English] | 1975 |
| | 60 | Mercedes Cresente | [Spanish] | 1975 |
| | 61 | Lorenzo Homar | [Spanish] | 1983 |
| | 62 | Lucila Padron | [Spanish] | undated |
| | 63 | Encarnation Ramirez | [Spanish] | undated |

Series 2: Puerto Rican Community, 1960-1983.

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|------------|
| | 1 | “Danger in Puerto Rico” by Ramon Colon | | 1960 |
| | 2 | Clippings on Puerto Rican community | | 1965-1975 |
| | 3 | News clippings on P.R.O.H | | 1973, 1975 |

| | | |
|---|--|------------|
| 4 | Materials from Universidad de Puerto Rico | 1971-1973 |
| 5 | Materials from El Museo del Barrio | circa 1973 |
| 6 | Puerto Rican Studies materials | circa 1974 |
| 7 | Puerto Rican Studies materials (NYC Community College) | circa 1975 |
| 8 | Puerto Rican Studies materials (Hunter College) | circa 1983 |
| 9 | List of "Community Leaders-Brooklyn" | undated |

Series 3: Administrative Materials, 1968-1984

| | | | |
|---|----|--|------------|
| 4 | 1 | Information sheets for people not interviewed | circa 1973 |
| | 2 | Information sheets for P.R.O.H participants 1 – 10 | 1973-1974 |
| | 3 | Information sheets for P.R.O.H. participants 11-20 | 1974 |
| | 4 | Information sheets for P.R.O.H. participants 21-30 | 1974 |
| | 5 | Information sheets for P.R.O.H. participants 31-40 | 1974 |
| | 6 | Information sheets for P.R.O.H. participants 41-50 | 1973-1974 |
| | 7 | Information sheets for P.R.O.H. participants 51-60 | 1973-1974 |
| | 8 | Information sheets for P.R.O.H. participants 61-69 | 1973-1974 |
| | 9 | Information sheet for all other participants | 1975 |
| | 10 | Interview abstracts from Brooklyn's Hispanic Communities Documentation Project | undated |
| | 11 | Materials on oral histories | 1968-1976 |
| | 12 | Project reports | 1975, 1977 |
| | 13 | Financial records | 1973-1975 |
| | 14 | Personnel information | 1973-1975 |
| | 15 | Correspondence | 1971-1984 |
| | 16 | Administrative notes | undated |