Our University: Political Change and Student Protest in the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras, 1952-1981

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2021

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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June 16, 2021

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University of Pittsburgh, 2021

This doctoral dissertation analyzes the course of student activism at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras, the largest campus in Puerto Rico's public university system, during the first three decades of the island's current political status as an *Estado Libre Asociado* (Associated Free State/Commonwealth). It makes contributions in three lines of argument: university-state relations, connections between the student activism and the Puerto Rican independence movement, and student demographics and cultures. I found that the Puerto Rican state was committed to public higher education to advance socioeconomic mobility and instill civic virtue. Contradictions within the colonial *Estado Libre Asociado* are traceable through the University of Puerto Rico as it participated in the development of a cultural nationalist imaginary while having expansive US military presence through ROTC programs. I also explore interactions between student activism and pro-independence organizations off-campus, particularly in years known as the peak of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* (New Struggle for Independence). I refrain from describing mid-twentieth century pro-independence student groups as a unified student movement, instead highlighting their diversity constant evolution. While the *Nueva Lucha* is known for its Left-leaning bent, this dissertation demonstrates that legacies of socially conservative Puerto Rican Nationalism exerted considerable influence over pro-independence student activism in Río Piedras. Additionally, I explain the ways in which student demographics and cultures shaped

waves of student protest in Río Piedras. I examine how the campus became more socioeconomically and ideologically diverse during the mid-twentieth century due in part to *Estado Libre Asociado* initiatives and federal GI Bills. Increases in enrollment during this time resulted in the growth of annexationist (pro-statehood) student organizing in opposition to pro-independence groups in a campus where most of the student body did not belong to any political organization. Debates regarding university reform, anti-war activism, student-worker collaborations, and struggles in favor of expanded access to higher education shaped activist trajectories and contemporary discourses that represent students as leaders of social mobilization in Puerto Rico. Overall, this dissertation shows ways in which campus protest in Río Piedras influenced the development of Puerto Rican political identities during the mid-twentieth century.

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Dedication

Al Dr. Juan Rafael Hernández García

Profesor

Amigo

Yoda

Que tu fuerza y fe en mí me acompañen siempre

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I acknowledge my dissertation committee, Drs. George Reid Andrews, Laura Gotkowitz, Aldo Lauria Santiago, and my advisor, Dr. Lara Putnam. Reid's wise, honest, and empathetic advice was crucial throughout the entirety of my graduate studies. Laura gave me some of the best written feedback in all my graduate trajectory. I thank Lara for pushing me to think outside of traditional narratives on Puerto Rican history and for keeping an eye on my wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Mil gracias* to Aldo for being present and watching out for my scholarly development during so many crucial moments in both Puerto Rico and the United States.

I truly came of age and matured as a scholar in the University of Pittsburgh's Department of History. I thank Drs. Diego Holstein, Liann Tsoukas, and Molly Warsh for their mentorship as I developed my teaching and research skills. I will forever be proud of the 2014 international cohort; Bethany, Araceli, José Andrés, and Artan, and the ways we supported each other's intellectual growth. Greetings and chats with the staff in our Department, Grace, Kathy, Patty, Molly, Lizzy, and Cindy brightened many days. I thank Emily Seger for her friendship and for constantly inspiring me with her commitment to our field over the years. I am the most indebted to my best friends and colleagues Titas Chakraborty and Jesse Olsavsky for their motivation and support. I would not have made it through graduate school without learning from them, thank you for the truest of solidarities and comraderies.

Storming through research in the aftermath of Hurricane María was a community endeavor. I am much obliged to the staff of the Archives of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies for seamlessly facilitating research on an archipelago-based topic. I thank Aldo and my friends Joseph Torres

González, Fabiola Enríquez, and Tamar Winer for meeting up with me in New York City and letting me know that I was not alone. I will be forever grateful to my relatives Nélida "Pinelly" Smith, Wendy Smith, Nevada Raffaele, Lucien Raffaele, and Mariela Smith for opening their doors in Brooklyn and reminding me that a family's love transcends oceans and time.

My research in Puerto Rico would not have been possible without the help of a wide array of librarians and archivists. I thank Joely Alvarado for her help in the Archivo Universitario del Recinto de Río Piedras, as well as all the staff and student workers. Joely not only exposed me to the University of Puerto Rico's documentary wealth but became a great friend. I also acknowledge Julio Quirós at the Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, and the staff at the Archivo General de Puerto Rico and the Biblioteca y Hemeroteca Puertorriqueña. I am grateful for your patience with my constant requests for boxes or microfilm reels, and for fruitful conversations about an institution we love so dearly.

Constant interaction with faculty and graduate students enriched work at the University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras. I thank Professor Luis E. Agrait for listening to my streams of consciousness, telling stories about the time I researched, and recognizing my intellectual growth as no one else did. Always indebted to the Department of History's faculty for so many conversations *en los pasillos de la Facultad de Humanidades del Recinto de Río Piedras*, the place that has taught me the most in this world. Exchanges with graduate students and alumni from the Graduate Program in History both inspired me and made me feel proud of an academic community in constant decolonization. Always in awe and grateful for all the labor and community fostered by staff in the University of Puerto Rico's Historical Research Center. I especially thank Dr. Juan Rafael Hernández García for letting me invade his office to speak about History, Star Wars, and life. Juan had more faith in me than I ever had in myself and saw potential where my perfectionism

enhanced shortcomings. We lost him in February 2021, and this dissertation is dedicated to his memory.

I thank my family, both blood relatives and chosen, for their support throughout all my seven years at Pitt. My *tíos* Manolo and Yahaira were attentive as fellow Southwestern PA residents. In Puerto Rico, my mother Sofía, my Abuela Sofía, and my *sestras* Nora and Rocío were my rock in both happy and difficult times. I am also lucky to have strong bonds with a group of close friends who both shared my joys and supported me in times of sorrow. My besties, Rosadel and Christian, my *comadre,* Ashley, my Pittsburgh besties, Sofía and Luiggi, I am blessed by your friendship. I will forever be indebted to my friend Dr. Bianca González-Lesser for her support on my final year dissertating and on the job market during the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks for reminding me that I could do it. A special acknowledgement to my dear friend and colleague Dr. Harry Franqui-Rivera for so many fun and intellectually challenging conversations.

Finally, I would like to thank former activists who helped shape my thinking and research processes. Whether it was through oral history interviews or colloquial conversations over a coffee or a beer, my interaction with members of the Río Piedras campus' student movement shaped my outlook on trajectories of protest in the University of Puerto Rico system. While I interacted with many historical actors and current activists, I am especially indebted to Jesús Delgado Burgos, Antonio Gatzambide Géigel, Pablo Torres Otero, Alfredo Torres Otero, and Rafael Anglada López for their time, insight, and jokes. Thank you for entrusting me with your trajectories and sharing your commitment to change in Puerto Rico. May this work and its future iterations highlight the solidarities that define our *patria*'s youth struggles for justice and liberation in all their complex manifestations.

1.0 Introduction

In 1968, the University of Puerto Rico system released *Nuestra universidad* (Our University), a student-produced short film intended to encourage archipelago high schoolers to take its admission examination. The film showed a modern campus in the city of Río Piedras with updated educational facilities and a lively social scene. Then university president Jaime Benítez was part of the film, where he declared that the University of Puerto Rico was "the people's university" and that it was among the finest in the American continent. While Benítez recognized that the institution could only admit the best students due to a shortage of slots, he framed the institution as the "setting of the life, the hope, the illusions, and the future of Puerto Rican youths, and for that reason, of Puerto Rico as a whole."[1] Reality, though, was more fractious. As the institution released this video, student activists protested alongside cafeteria workers in favor of a new contract and were escalating struggles against the Reserve Officer Training Program (ROTC) in the context of anti-Vietnam war activism. Campus organizing against institutional policies and Puerto Rico's political status quo tested the hope and trust instilled in the university by the Puerto Rican government and a substantial portion of the archipelago's population.

This dissertation examines mid-twentieth century student activism at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras to51 analyze the role of student activists in political organizing in Puerto Rico becoming entwined in specific and impactful ways over the course of the period under study, in a process in which students' choices and divisions played a significant role. Political student

[1] *Nuestra Universidad* (1968; Río Piedras, Puerto Rico), online. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ELbh87T9OU.

organizations in Río Piedras were diverse, with factions within pro-independence and annexationist (pro-US statehood) sectors. I chose to focus on the Río Piedras campus because it was the University of Puerto Rico's oldest, largest, most visible, and by the late-1940s most politicized institutional unit. The mid-twentieth century witnessed significant political and social transformations in Puerto Rico. In 1952, the archipelago became the world's first *Estado Libre Asociado* (Associated Free State/ELA). The goal of US authorities and leaders of the then-hegemonic Popular Democratic Party was that the archipelago would serve as a Cold War model US-sponsored capitalist development for its Latin American neighbors. The ELA government adopted the University of Puerto Rico as a pillar for its developmentalist agenda, assigning to it the instruction of a skilled middle class and collaboration in the construction of a cultural nationalist imaginary about *puertorriqueñidad* (Puerto Rican being or belonging).[2] State-sponsored access to higher education increased over the mid-twentieth century and diversified the University of Puerto Rico's student body. Ironically, some of the students who acquired access to higher education via these government programs became radicalized against the ELA, engaging in political organizing against the state that had invested so much – financially and symbolically – in the University of Puerto Rico. The Río Piedras campus came to reflect some of the political

[2] Pablo Navarro Rivera argued that the University of Puerto Rico was victim of US-American political control and a tool of empire for the acculturation of archipelago elites. Similar statements have been echoed by Carlos Gil and Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón. Pablo Navarro Rivera, *Universidad de Puerto Rico: De control político a crisis permanente, 1903-1952 (*Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2000); Carlos Gil, "The University of Porto Rico… 'Al margen de la ley,'" in Silvia Álvarez Cubelo & Carmen Raffucci, eds. *Frente a la Torre: Ensayos del Centenario de la Universidad de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2005); Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, *El libro, la calle y el fusil: Breve historia del movimiento estudiantil puertorriqueño, formación de la hegemonía de los EEUU en Puerto Rico y otros ensayos* (San Juan: Ediciones La Sierra, 2018); Aida Negrón de Montilla, *La americanización de Puerto Rico y el sistema de instrucción pública, 1900-1930* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1990). This dissertation joins recent historiography on the impact of schooling in Puerto Rico's American century show a more complex perspective, emphasizing the agency of parents, and in this case students, demanding access to education and high quality instruction. Solsiree del Moral, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013); Del Moral, "Colonial Citizens of a Modern Empire: War, Illiteracy, and Physical Education in Puerto Rico, 1917-1930," *NWIG: New West Indian Guide* 87, No. 1/2 (2013), 30-61.

ideologies and struggles adopted by Puerto Rico's politically active sectors during the mid-twentieth century. Some sectors of the university community actively questioned the ELA project and the role the university played in archipelago society, establishing consequential connections and collaborations with both electoral and revolutionary political movements off-campus.[3]

My project builds on existing literature that focuses on how mid-twentieth century pro-independence student activists in Río Piedras came to frame their institutional struggles as part of broader calls for Puerto Rican independence. I found that independence was the most visible and explicitly articulated, but not the only political ideology that student activists adopted as a guiding principle for campus protest. Annexationism – that is, ideas and actions in favor of US statehood for Puerto Rico – also drew sympathizers to organize.[4] Overall, however, the majority of Río Piedras's student body supported the ELA, mirroring Puerto Ricans' satisfaction with the economic growth experienced in the ELA's early decades.[5] Understanding this diversity of student political affiliations is instrumental to analyses of campus protest in Río Piedras. Incorporating annexationist and pro-ELA perspectives sheds light on the complexities of political action within a university setting, as diverse campus-linked groups capitalized on the institution's potential as an activist space and went beyond a single ideological line regarding Puerto Rico's status.

Therefore, this study gives central attention to pro-independence student activism, which became an important part of the archipelago's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* (New Struggle

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[3] In the context of this project, the term "university community" refers to students, faculty, and workers who came together to execute the university's educational and outreach goals. While university administrators were considered at times to be members of the university community, this dissertation keeps them out of its definition of "university community" because of the ways their political affiliation sometimes led them to execute government orders rather than to prioritize educational goals during their tenure.

[4] Edgardo Meléndez, *Puerto Rico's Statehood Movement* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); Ayala & Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*.

[5] Arthur Liebman, *The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970).

for Independence).[6] Pro-independence student organizing made headlines as organizations like the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (Federation of University Students for Independence/FUPI) opposed ROTC, struggled alongside workers demanding fairer conditions, and pushed for more representative university structures. Some *fupistas* (FUPI members) participated in the founding of the *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI), which scholars argue initiated the *Nueva Lucha* in 1959. This dissertation shows, however, that socially conservative Puerto Rican Nationalism exerted a crucial influence over pro-independence student activism even as organizations within the *Nueva Lucha* adopted Third World-aligned anti-imperialist and in some cases Marxist-Leninist platforms. This finding contributes to growing literature on the Puerto Rican independence movement from the mid-twentieth century to the present by showing how university students influenced the strategies adopted by a wide variety of pro-independence political collectives that are led by sectors of the archipelago's bourgeoisie to this day.[7] Students incorporated tactics of non-violent activism borrowed from Gandhi and the US-American Civil Rights movement in anti-war protest, acting to include revolutionary politics in pro-independence syndicalist organizing. The Río Piedras campus would become an activist space where internal tensions within the Puerto Rican independence movement became visible, affecting institutional struggles for university reform. Meanwhile, not

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[6] Juan Ángel Silén defined the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* as the reconstruction of the Puerto Rican independence movement via the rejection of sectarism and dogmatism. Though the term is used widely in academic and activist literature on Puerto Rican independence, it does not have a concise meaning or periodization. Some scholars argue that it lasted from 1959 until the present, starting with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and the founding of the anti-electoral *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI). César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe deemed the *Nueva Lucha* over by 1975, before the Puerto Rican Socialist Party participated in archipelago elections. Juan Ángel Silén, *La nueva lucha de independencia* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1973); Ché Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico: Una lucha por la soberanía y la igualdad bajo el dominio estadounidense* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2017); César Ayala & Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 226-229.

[7] María Acosta Cruz, *Dream Nation: Puerto Rican Culture and the Fictions of Independence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014); Luis A. Ferrao, *Pedro Albizu Campos y el nacionalismo puertorriqueño* (Harrisonburg: Editorial Cultural, 1990); Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico.*

only was campus activism important in shaping the course of the *Nueva Lucha*, but it was also immensely crucial in molding the perspectives of those who would analyze and memorialize it. Mid-twentieth century pro-independence student activism in Río Piedras initiated activist trajectories that most often contribute to contemporary misrepresentations of students as the vanguard of resistance and leaders of social struggle in Puerto Rico.

My dissertation is grounded on three lines of argument. Firstly, I focus on the relationship between the University of Puerto Rico and the ELA. I find that changes in the university's leadership and administrators' responses to student activism mirrored broader transformations within the ELA's political spectrum, for they responded to their party of allegiance's leadership style and project for the university. A single-party, pro-ELA regime developed the university under the leadership of Chancellor Jaime Benítez, investing a substantial amount of the archipelago's budget to grow the institution. This growth led to the diversification of the University of Puerto Rico's student body, with youths arriving from varied geographic origins within the archipelago, expanding the breadth of student access according to class, and eventually mirroring political sympathies off-campus. Military education, an important part of everyday life in the Río Piedras campus since the creation of its ROTC program, played an important role in this process. As this dissertation will demonstrate, a period of failed pro-ELA reformism and the emergence of a two-party system defined by strife between pro-ELA and annexationist politicians affected the University of Puerto Rico, leading to changes in the ways that the institution was perceived by the broader public.

Secondly, I focus on the Puerto Rican independence movement's ideological and tactical changes after Puerto Rico became a Commonwealth. Students participated in the creation of organizations that launched the ideologically diverse *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*,

alongside flows of students transitioning into the leadership of off-campus pro-independence organizations throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. I found that traditional, culturally conservative elements of Puerto Rican Nationalism exerted influence over what became known as the *Nueva Lucha*, even as collectives became identified with anti-imperialism, social-democracy or Marxism-Leninism. Youths, particularly university students, played an important role in the ideological and organizational changes within the Puerto Rican independence movement despite the fact that they were attending classes in an institution financed by the archipelago's colonial state. Broadly speaking, Nationalism also shaped the ways the University of Puerto Rico worked, its mission in Puerto Rican society, and the ways sectors of their community capitalized on its potential as an activist space.

The third line of argument focuses on student actors themselves, analyzing the factors that led students to organize, how ideas about Puerto Rico's status influenced their actions, and the ways they related to political collectives off-campus. Río Piedras's student body encompassed pro-ELA, annexationist, and pro-independence perspectives. While pro-independence collectives saw campus activism at the University of Puerto Rico as a key to wider agendas of political change, pro-ELA and annexationist sectors organized in response to pro-independence student actions, rather than aligning with specific opposing off-campus political platforms. I found that sympathies for Puerto Rican independence shaped student protest in Río Piedras, and vice versa. Pro-independence student activists came to frame institutional ills as inherently connected to US imperialism, as the university community had limited power over its own affairs due to its connection to the colonial ELA government. Still, pro-independence student activists understood their actions as limited to the university as a space for political action, consequently, deeming Puerto Rican workers as a vanguard of revolutionary struggle by the mid-1970s.

Through my analysis of university-state relations, the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, and student protest in Río Piedras, my dissertation demonstrates that campus protest influenced the development of political identities both on campus and beyond it during the mid-twentieth century, especially but not solely for those on the Left. Legacies of the events studied in this dissertation still influence Puerto Rico's activist scenario, as many current pro-independence leaders participated in student mobilizations during their own university studies and Left-wing activist collectives still rely on the University of Puerto Rico to rally militants. Deconstructing myths regarding mid-twentieth century student activism in Río Piedras sheds light on the influence and limitations of actions against modern US empire led by educated youths.

1.1 Context

Puerto Rico is a northern Caribbean archipelago comprised of one large island, two island municipalities, and 143 islands, cays, islets, and atolls that the United States acquired as a spoil of war from Spain after winning the Spanish-American War in 1898.[8] At that time, the archipelago's population was around one million people. Having served as a military colony across centuries of Spanish imperial domain, it was a largely agrarian society that relied on sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee production. Late-nineteenth century Puerto Rico was racially diverse, with around 363,000 out of 953,000 inhabitants falling into Afro-descendant racial categories.[9] With the imposition of

[8] César J. Ayala & Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since* 1898; Fernando Picó, *Historia general de Puerto Rico*, fourth edition (San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 2008); Francisco Scarano, *Puerto Rico: cinco siglos de historia* (México: McGraw-Hill Interamericana, 2008).
[9] George Reid Andrews, *Afro Latin America, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 207. See also Jalil Sued Badillo & Ángel López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro* (San Juan: Editorial Cultural, 1986).

the Foraker Act by the US Congress in 1900, Puerto Rico transitioned toward a civil government, thus, instituting a governmental structure comprised of a governor and an executive council named by the President of the United States, a 35-member elected House of Representatives, the establishment of a Federal Court and non-voting representation in the US House of Representatives. The United States also imposed a series of Americanization efforts, with education serving as one of the main drivers to assimilate the populations of Puerto Rico and other recently acquired territories such as the Philippines and Guam.[10] Among those initiatives was the creation of the University of Puerto Rico in 1903, intended to train teachers who would instill US-American traditions and the English language throughout the archipelago.[11] Early developments in the institution's history would result in the opposite, however, as some students, faculty members, and eventually administrators, would contest forces that diminished cultural influences considered to be Puerto Rican. By the 1930s some of these same people would become prominent, advocating for the archipelago's independence.

While Puerto Rico was a culturally Latin American space at the time of the university's founding, the United States' presence in the institution was prominent in the early-twentieth century. Instruction was supposed to be in English, but a failure to recruit English-speaking faculty and the hiring of both Puerto Rican nationalist and Spanish professors resulted in efforts to make Spanish the official language of instruction. The usage of funds granted by the Morrill Land Grant Act for the construction of a campus in the town of Mayaguez led to the implementation of military

[10] Solsiree Del Moral, *Negotiating Empire*, Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico During US Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Alfonso López Yustos, *Historia documental de la educación en Puerto Rico, 1503-1970* (San Juan: Sandemann, 1986).
[11] Silvia Álvarez Curbelo & Carmen Raffucci, eds, *Frente a La Torre*; Nelson González Mercado, *La historia de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1903-1930* (MA thesis, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, 1982).

education programming in all units within the University of Puerto Rico in 1918.[12] This occurred a year after plans to grant citizenship to Puerto Ricans came to fruition with the Jones–Shafroth Act.[13] By the beginning of this dissertation's periodization in the 1950s, ROTC training was mandatory for all male pupils for the first two years of their studies. A military presence was highly visible in the Río Piedras campus, as cadets wore their uniforms to class, and troops paraded around campus regularly. ROTC came to be seen as a normal component of higher education in the University of Puerto Rico by the early-to-mid-twentieth century, offering both institutional funding and a professional career for its students. Nevertheless, opposition to military education was among the causes that fueled student mobilization in Río Piedras during the 1960s.

This trajectory placed the University of Puerto Rico both within and starkly outside of the broader US national and hemispheric trends. Political organizing and protest have been part of student life in universities, influencing both university policy and national politics across the Americas. Latin American universities often played important roles in nation-building processes, particularly those founded in the aftermath of wars of independence.[14] Subsequent student struggles have been connected to university reform, often revolving around ease of access and greater student and faculty voice in administrative affairs. These ideas mostly harked back to Argentina's 1918 *Manifiesto de Córdoba*, a document that honed student rebellion toward calls

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[12] See chronology in Jorge L. Colón, "Legislación federal, el ROTC en Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico" in Anita Yudkin, ed. *Universidad y (anti) militarismo: Historia Luchas y debates* (San Juan: Universitarios por la Desmilitarización, 2005), 169-186.
[13] Sam Erman, *Almost Citizens: Puerto Rico, the US Constitution, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Harry Franqui-Rivera, "National Mythologies: U.S. Citizenship for the People of Puerto Rico and Military service/Mitologia Nacional: Ciudadanía Norteamericana Para La Gente de Puerto Rico y Servicio Militar." *Memorias,* 10, no. 21 (September 1, 2013): 5-21; Charles Venator-Santiago & Edgardo Melendez, "U.S. Citizenship in Puerto Rico: One Hundred Years After the Jones Act." *Centro Journal* 29, no. 1 (March 22, 2017): 14–37.
[14] Manuel Agustín Aguirre, *Universidad y movimientos estudiantiles* (Quito: Editorial Alberto Crespo Enclada, 1987); María de Lourdes Alvarado, Mauricio Archila & Gilberto Castañeda, eds. *Movimientos estudiantiles en la historia de América Latina, Volumen I y II* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 2002).

for modernization and the inclusion of students in institutional decision-making processes.[15] Mexican universities were among the main actors shaping global youth activism in 1968, protesting government corruption and becoming one of the sectors most affected in the Tlatelolco Massacre in October of that year.[16] Global youth counterculture made incursion in Latin American universities in the 1960s and 1970s, affecting resistance against university administrations and political regimes.[17] These youths were often inspired by the anti-imperialist non-aligned movement, which criticized US intervention from a Leftist perspective. Overall, both education as a route to social mobility and on-campus political mobilization played a role in the development of Latin American middle classes' political identities over the twentieth century, with youth actions influencing broader political engagement in their societies.

Meanwhile, historians of the United States tend to connect student activism with the expansion of public schooling in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, with student demands ranging from resistance to institutional rulebooks and policies to opposition to war and racial discrimination. Protests organized by students from radicalized minority demographics in US universities in the 1960s led to the creation of academic departments and centers that focused on the diverse experiences of Black and Latino populations.[18] As youths became increasingly

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[15] Juventud Argentina de Córdoba, "Manifiesto Liminar" (1918) https://www.unc.edu.ar/sobre-la-unc/manifiesto-liminar.
[16] Susana Draper, *1968 Mexico: Constellations of Freedom and Democracy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); Elena Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco: testimonios de historia oral* (México City: Biblioteca Era, 1971).
[17] Victoria Langland, *Speaking of Flowers: Student Movements and the Making and Remembering of 1968 in Military Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Valeria Manzano, *The Age of Youth in Argentina: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality from Perón to Videla* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Claudia Rueda, *Students of Revolution: Youth, Protest, and Coalition Building in Somoza-Era Nicaragua* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019); Heather Vrana, *This City Belongs to You : A History of Student Activism in Guatemala, 1944-1996* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).
[18] Stefan Bradley, *Upending the Ivory Tower: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Ivy League* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Mario T. García & Sal Castro, *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (Chapel Hill: Univeristy of North Carolina Press, 2011).

motivated to pursue higher education, university students struggled in favor of freedom of expression on campus, seeking validation as full-fledged members of their academic communities.[19] Student activists throughout the continent participated in anti-Vietnam war protests in the 1960s and 1970s and in support of divestiture from South Africa in the 1980s. Twentieth century student activists in the US territory of Puerto Rico had similar demands, but their actions are anchored in legacies of resistance that are neither fully US-American or Latin American.

Student protest in Puerto Rico differed from its counterparts across the Americas because of its connection to struggles to change the archipelago's colonial political status. Early in the university's history, students in the 1910s clashed with some of their high school counterparts and demanded that the administration recognize their victory in a sporting event.[20] But by the 1930s, the university's then-elite student body staged nation-wide protests against the naming of a socialist politician to the institution's Board of Trustees.[21] The politization of student protest in Río Piedras was influenced by the university's internally contradictory mission, forged by tensions between Americanization agendas and the influence that nationalist and Spanish faculty members exerted on academic affairs. Struggling to make Spanish the official language of instruction and calling for the expansion of the Liberal Arts beyond purely utilitarian career tracks to bolster economic development, faculty members became active participants in student radicalization

[19] Clara Bingham, *Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost its Mind and Found its Soul* (New York: Random House, 2016); Julian Foster & Durward Long, eds. *Protest!: Student Activism in America* (New York: Morrow, 1970).
[20] González Mercado, *La historia de la Universidad de Puerto Rico*.
[21] Jorell Meléndez Badillo, "Strike Against Labor: The 1933 Student Mobilizations" in *The Lettered Barriada: Workers, Archival Power, and the Politics of Knowledge in Puerto Rico (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

regardless of their personal political beliefs.[22] Still, over the mid-twentieth century the University of Puerto Rico would become known as a hotbed of pro-independence activism, taking forms ranging from anti-war activism to student-worker collaborations, a trajectory that would shape contemporary struggles in favor of preserving access to public higher education in the archipelago.

While independence has been the political status alternative most visibly embraced by student activists in the Río Piedras campus, it has been historically unpopular among the Puerto Rican population. The *Grito de Lares*, Puerto Rico's only armed uprising in favor of independence from Spain, failed in 1868.[23] In the following decades, a select group of pro-independence Puerto Ricans used exile in the United States to organize against the Spanish empire, holding abolitionist beliefs and envisioning independent nations where citizenship transcended racial and class boundaries.[24] Still, among most Puerto Rican creole elites during the late-nineteenth century, association with the United States was perceived to be a more attractive alternative than independence.

In the decades after 1898, as some members of the island's political elites grew disillusioned with the potential of annexation to the United States, pro-independence politicians became part of the archipelago's civil government. Puerto Rico's Communist Party became a small collective that advocated for independence in the 1920s, while most elected officials remained members of coalitionist parties that included autonomist politicians who wanted some degree of sovereignty while taking advantage of the full-extent of economic benefits that resulted from a

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[22] Mary Frances Gallart, *Jaime Benítez y la autonomía universitaria* (Río Piedras: 2011); Pablo Navarro Rivera, *De control político a crisis permanente*; Nereida Rodríguez, *Debate universitario y dominación colonial, 1941-1947* (San Juan, 1996).
[23] Francisco Moscoso, *Clases, revolución y libertad: estudios sobre el Grito de Lares de 1868* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 2006); Juan Ángel Silén, *Historia del Grito de Lares* (Rio Piedras: Kikiriki, 1972); Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim, *El grito de Lares : sus causas y sus hombres* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1985).
[24] Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

relationship with the United States.[25] Economic struggles brought forth by the Great Depression made the prospect of separation from the United States more popular and debated than it had been since the US invasion, but it would take populist leader and Nationalist Party president Pedro Albizu Campos to rally substantial support for independence. A campus clash in 1948 sparked by the denial of permission to host a talk by Albizu Campos would turn the tide of campus activism in Río Piedras and explicitly connect it to pro-independence politics. Just two years later in 1950, a failed armed revolt against the US-linked government guided by nationalist militants led to enhanced persecution and suppression of pro-independence organizations in Puerto Rico.[26] As Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States changed in 1952, so did the role the university played in shaping the minds of archipelago youths.

The *Estado Libre Asociado* transformed Puerto Rico's public university, which already had a reputation as a hotbed of youth protest, into a pillar of its developmentalist agendas. The pro-ELA Popular Democratic Party invested heavily in higher education, expanding student scholarship programs, and developing extension centers that facilitated access for youths from rural areas. Pro-ELA Political Science professor and Chancellor Jaime Benítez advocated for Latin American *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy), a concept that called for limited government intervention in academic and administrative affairs, from the 1940s onward.[27] Perceptions of *autonomía universitaria* among administrators, faculty members, and elected officials shifted over the decades covered by this dissertation, influencing the ways administrators and the government tackled student mobilizations. In analyzing the relationship that the university

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[25] Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico*; Meléndez, *Partidos, política pública y status en Puerto* Rico; Bolívar Pagán, *Historia de los partidos políticos puertorriqueños: (1898-1956)* (San Juan: 1972).
[26] Isabel Picó de Hernández, *Los estudiantes universitarios y el proceso político puertorriqueño* (PhD dissertation, Political Science Department, Harvard University, 1974); Rodríguez, *Debate universitario y dominación colonial.*
[27] Gallart, *Jaime Benítez y la autonomía universitaria*.

had with the Puerto Rican state more broadly, this study unpacks how agendas related to public institutions played out amid an evolving political project in need of legitimization.

1.2 The Public University and the Puerto Rican State in the Mid-Twentieth Century

This dissertation explores the relationship between the University of Puerto Rico as an institution and the *Estado Libre Asociado* as a political project. I found that the University of Puerto Rico evolved rapidly away from its origins as a project of Americanization in the early-twentieth century. By the late 1920s, Puerto Rican and Spanish university professors' Hispanophile approaches to higher education had already taken university curricula away from tendencies that reinforced US dominion over the archipelago.[28] The pro-ELA Popular Democratic Party's well-received platform from the 1940s through the mid-1960s strongly emphasized investment in higher education, consequently playing an important role in the expansion of the University of Puerto Rico.[29] Along these lines, Chancellor Jaime Benítez foregrounded a new approach to higher education in Puerto Rico when he became its first archipelago-born leader. Benítez argued that Puerto Rican culture was part of a broader "Western civilization" and embarked on an expansion plan to both enlarge the university's numbers and strengthen its programs via a Liberal Arts model that emphasized General Education.

In the aftermath of nationalist-led protests in 1948, Chancellor Jaime Benítez laid out explicitly his *Casa de Estudios* philosophy for Puerto Rican higher education. Inspired by Spanish

[28] Gallart, *Jaime Benítez y la autonomía universitaria*; Navarro Rivera, *De control político a crisis permanente*; Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico*.
[29] Pagán, *Historia de los partidos políticos de Puerto Rico*.

philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, Benítez envisioned a university with a Western civilization-inspired Liberal Arts curriculum that would be devoid of partisan political activity. This was a vision that could nurture certain kinds of cultural nationalism, but that rejected actions against Puerto Rico's status within the university setting.[30] Over subsequent decades, faculty and student activism sought more expansive participation in the university's decision-making structures, in ways that would bring the University of Puerto Rico more in line with norms of university governance in Latin American institutions. Discussions and actions regarding university reform would ultimately facilitate political radicalization and collaboration among students, faculty, and workers some of whom came by the late-1960s to frame their dissatisfaction with internal institutional problems as part of broader structural ills that resulted from Puerto Rico's colonial status.

Activist sectors did not, however, form a unified contingent across the mid-twentieth century. Rather, the campus encompassed distinct visions for the University of Puerto Rico and mirrored changes in Puerto Rico's political spectrum at large. Most of Río Piedras's students likely supported the ELA government and Jaime Benítez's plans for the university throughout his tenure as Chancellor from the 1940s through the mid-1960s, making political organizing and protest not only unappealing, but unnecessary to reach their plans.[31] Moreover, the role of the university in ELA developmentalism went beyond its role in cultural affairs. State investment in higher education resulted in the diversification of student demographics and expansive coverage in Puerto Rico's mainstream press. The university would not only train professionals but also graduate an

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[30] Jaime Benítez, *Junto a La Torre: Jornadas de un programa universitario (1942- 1962)* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1962); Benítez, *La Casa de Estudios* (San Juan: Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1985); Benítez, *La Universidad del futuro: Informe del rector al Consejo Superior de Enseñanza de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1964).
[31] Ibid, Liebman, *The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students*.

informed electorate that would bolster social progress and economic prosperity. By the late 1950s, a whopping one-third of Puerto Rico's budget was invested in public education, as schooling at the K-12 level and the University of Puerto Rico both grew in order to keep up with the demands of industries that chose to invest in the archipelago.[32]

A robust university budget allowed the construction of campuses and the expansion of scholarship programs, which enabled students from rural areas and low-income households to reach the university to a degree unseen in Puerto Rico's past. As students from rural and low-income areas made it to Río Piedras, they contributed perspectives beyond the traditionally elite leadership that had characterized student radicalism on campus in the 1940s. Thus, by the mid-1950s, the Río Piedras campus saw debates on Puerto Rican politics and culture expanded by a larger and socioeconomically diverse student body. As this dissertation explores, this came to be seen by some pro-ELA and most annexationist political leaders as a threat to governmental projects for the University and Puerto Rico's overall future. Meanwhile, the ideological diversity of the Río Piedras campus' student body was mirrored by its faculty throughout the mid-twentieth century, with some radicalized faculty groups leading struggles in favor of university reform, collaborating with students in anti-war struggles, and coming together to advance workers' rights regardless of their peers' support for the university administration.

Ironically, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs played an important role in this process even as the university distanced itself from its past as an Americanization venture. ROTC provided both the students and the institution with funding and opportunities for community

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[32] Luis Nieves Falcón, *Recruitment to Higher Education in Puerto Rico*, 1940-1960 (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1965); Melvin M. Tumin & Arnold S. Feldman, *Social Class and Social Change in Puerto Rico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Waldemiro Vélez Cardona, *El financiamiento de la educación superior en Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Ediciones Educación Superior, 2002).

formation. Anthropologist Rima Brusi has recently argued that military education programs perpetuated a dangerous, symbolic violence in the University of Puerto Rico, which she understands as a space where humanistic inquiry is supposed to curb the elitism of military structures.[33] But as will be shown in this dissertation, Chancellor Jaime Benítez saw ROTC and the Air Force ROTC as crucial components of the University of Puerto Rico's course offerings throughout his tenure as an administrator, maintaining that they taught practical skills that could lead students toward respectable professional careers. For their part, as I trace in this dissertation, pro-independence students and faculty's opposition to military education would strengthen over the mid-twentieth century, resulting in diverse multi-sector protests in the context of anti-war activism in the late-1960s and early-1970s. By the end of this period, this would lead pro-independence campus activists to openly question the degree of institutional change possible within the existing colonial system.

It is striking but not unique that radicalized students in Puerto Rico pointed their criticisms against the state that funded their university in their activist rhetoric. Echoing findings from scholarship on student movements elsewhere, this dissertation shows how youths who reached the Río Piedras campus were able to engage in campus activism due to decreased financial and social responsibilities. Education costs remained low, the university offered part-time work opportunities, and the Río Piedras's community offered opportunities for students to live together and socialize.[34] This freedom, along with the undergraduate Liberal Arts model that centered

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[33] Rima Brusi, "Los espacios universitarios y la actividad militar: El caso del ROTC en la Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayaguez," in Anita Yudkin, ed. *Universidad y (anti)militarismo: Historia, luchas y debates*, 143-154.
[34] María Luisa Moreno, *La arquitectura de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, recinto de Rio Piedras* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2000); Marcial E. Ocasio Meléndez, *Río Piedras, Ciudad universitaria: Notas para su historia* (San Juan: Comité Historia de los Pueblos, 1985); Rodney Lebrón Rivera, *A paso de Tortuga: Un acercamiento al proceso de desaparición del barrio Amparo* (BA thesis, University of Puerto Rico, 2012).

interdisciplinary instruction, triggered more ample questioning about the institutional ills that plagued a university in constant growth. Living in a colonial regime that actively encouraged voting and political engagement to legitimize its political model, student activists increasingly framed campus concerns as part of political demands toward the Puerto Rican state. But student rhetoric was far from uniform: it reflected the variety of off-campus debates and positions regarding the ELA. It also increasingly became a launching pad that sent politically active youths into various forms of organizing at the national level.

In analyzing the relationship between the University of Puerto Rico and the ELA, this dissertation contributes to scholarship on the political history of the archipelago, which has often centered on electoral politics with less attention to the social shifts that shaped them. Observing how governors interacted with university administrators over questions of *autonomía universitaria* sheds light on how the Puerto Rican state approached public institutions as means of economic growth and civic development within a colonial system. Pro-ELA leaders were more often content to remain distant from university affairs, confident in the institution's role shaping Puerto Rican minds and culture. Annexationist leaders, on the other hand, grew to see the university as a problematic entity due to waves of campus activism that they saw as detrimental to their goal of acquiring US statehood for Puerto Rico. Even as Puerto Rico's electoral politics settled into a two-party dynamic between pro-ELA and annexationist parties, within Río Piedras's campus, struggles in favor of independence maintained the highest profile.

1.3 The Puerto Rican Independence Movement in the Mid-Twentieth Century

In 1948, the University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras campus made headlines as nationalist students staged demonstrations in favor of freedom of expression. Hundreds of students mobilized after Chancellor Jaime Benítez's administration denied permission to invite Nationalist Party president Pedro Albizu Campos to give a talk on campus about the United Nations' treatment of Puerto Rico's case. While activist voices deemed 1948's mobilizations a "strike", the student-caused stoppage of university operations only lasted for a day. Still, it had wide-ranging repercussions. Chancellor Jaime Benítez canceled classes and closed the university for weeks to curb dissent, Discipline Committees expelled student activist leaders, and a new Student Rulebook prohibited political organizing at the institutional level.[35] According to historian Ivonne Acosta, the 1948 strike was among the reasons that resulted in the signing of the repressive *Ley de la Mordaza*, (Gag Law), which remained in place across Puerto Rico from 1948 to 1957.[36]

The 1948 strike serves as a microcosm of the impact of Nationalism in struggles for Puerto Rican independence from the 1930s through the mid-1950s. The Puerto Rican Nationalist Party was founded in September 1922. Pedro Albizu Campos joined in 1924 and became president in 1930, turning into one of the major proponents of violent action as means of bolstering struggles for Puerto Rican liberation. In the 1930s, the Nationalist Party's growth and radicalization resulted in confrontations with police that came to be known as the 1935 Río Piedras Massacre and the 1937 Ponce Massacre, the latter leading to arrests and the incarceration of Albizu Campos for ten

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[35] Isabel Picó de Hernández, *Los estudiantes universitarios y el proceso político puertorriqueño* (PhD dissertation, Political Science Department, Harvard University, 1974); Ruth M. Reynolds, *Campus in Bondage: A 1948 Microcosm of Puerto Rico in Bondage* (New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, 1989); Navarro Rivera, *De Control Político a crisis permanente.*

[36] Ivonne Acosta, *La mordaza: Puerto Rico, 1948-1957* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1998).

years in federal prison.[37] The 1940s were defined by a growing divide, as the Popular Democratic Party abandoned its pro-independence stance while the Nationalist Party further radicalized as organizing resumed after Albizu Campos' liberation from prison in 1947. The populist and radical character of the rhetoric adopted by nationalist leaders like Albizu Campos both in the university and beyond during the 1940s scared authorities, who sought to repress dissent by student suspensions and the persecution of nationalist militants. Waves of repression were insufficient to restrain nationalists as they staged an armed uprising and an assassination attempt on the US president in Blair House in 1950 and an attack on the US Congress in 1954. The latter resulted in the incarceration of nationalist perpetrators for twenty-five years.[38] Yet at the same time, both the Puerto Rican government and the University of Puerto Rico incorporated dimensions of nationalist discourses to their developmentalist agendas.[39]

Scholars and former activists discuss a *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* beginning in 1959 and lasting until the present. According to Juan Mari Brás, who helped found the *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI) in 1959 and later became General Secretary of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party from 1971 to 1993, the *Nueva Lucha* was not a single political organization, but a term used to define a convergence of organizations that took the

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[37] Pedro Aponte Vázquez, *Albizu: Su persecución por el FBI* (San Juan: Publicaciones René, 2000); Luis Ángel Ferrao, *Pedro Albizu Campos y el nacionalismo puertorriqueño*; Junta Pedro Albizu Campos, *Nervio y pulso del mundo: Nuevos ensayos sobre Pedro Albizu Campos y el nacionalismo revolucionario* (San Juan: Talla de Sombra Editores, 2014).

[38] Ché Paralitici, *Sentencia impuesta: 100 años de encarcelamientos por la independencia de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2004); Paralitici, *La represión contra el independentismo puertorriqueño: 1960-2010* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2011).

[39] Cultural nationalism under the Popular Democratic Party and the *Estado Libre Asociado* more broadly has been widely studied. See Martín Cruz Santos, *Afirmando la nación… Políticas culturales en Puerto Rico (1949-1968)* (San Juan: Ediciones Callejón, 2014); Arlene Dávila, *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Lillian Guerra, *Popular Expression and National Identity in Puerto Rico* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Hilda Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family: Framing Nation, Race, and Gender during the American Century* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014); Catherine March Kennerley, *Negociaciones Culturales: Los intelectuales y el proyecto pedagógico del estado muñocista* (San Juan: Ediciones Callejón, 2009).

struggle for Puerto Rican independence to the international sphere.[40] This included appealing to the United Nations and rallying students into organizations like the International Union of Students and the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students. Other scholars have highlighted the diverse manifestations of anti-imperialist struggle within the *Nueva Lucha*, including debates on electoral participation, armed struggle, and role of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric shaping political collectives.[41] Literary scholar María Acosta Cruz has argued that independence became a symbolic aspiration, reflecting how some politically active and educated sectors of Puerto Ricans imagined their nation, rather than a tangible political project that amassed the political will of archipelago peoples.[42] As this dissertation explores, mid-twentieth century pro-independence student activists reflected – and indeed, aided in molding – all of these messy contradictions, even as they became a very visible radicalized minority within a student body with diverse interests and goals.

Both the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party in the 1930s and 1940s and organizations within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* from the 1950s through the 1980s deemed student struggles an important component in their platforms. In this vision, students were primarily to serve as a catalyst to broader political actions, later transitioning into off-campus collectives as both leaders and rank-and-file organizers. This dissertation argues that the Río Piedras campus' pro-independence student organizations not only became closely connected to developments within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* over the mid-twentieth century but were impacted by collaborations and crises of pro-independence collectives outside the institution. Connections were

[40] Juan Mari Brás, *El independentismo puertorriqueño: Su pasado, su presente y su porvenir* (Santo Domingo: Editorial Cepa, 1984), 129.
[41] Paralitici, *Historia del independentismo puertorriqueño.*
[42] Acosta Cruz, *Dream Nation.*

symbiotic, as student activists also shaped pro-independence collectives either via inter-organizational exchanges or after pausing or finishing their studies. Students' founding of the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (FUPI) in 1956 predated the emergence of the *Nueva Lucha* by three years. *Fupistas* (FUPI militants) were part of the early meetings that led to the founding of the MPI, an anti-electoral coalition that sought to delegitimize the ELA by highlighting the limits of its electoral exercises and their limited power over Puerto Rican affairs. *Fupistas* fed the MPI's ranks consistently over the 1960s until a substantial sector of the MPI chose to reorganize as the Puerto Rican Socialist Party.

Other student organizations emerged to mirror divisions in the broader *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* off-campus, sometimes joining forces and other times countering the efforts of the FUPI at various points when campus conflicts triggered pro-independence activism. Rejection of the Vietnam War and its draft is often perceived as a time of convergence of the different groups and sectors within the *Nueva Lucha*, manifesting itself in the university setting as anti-ROTC struggles.[43] Organizations like the Pro-Independence University Youth, which sympathized with the Puerto Rican Independence Party, offered a pacifist alternative to the FUPI's anti-ROTC struggles. As some sectors of the *Nueva Lucha* began embracing socialist platforms in the mid-1970s, the Union of Socialist Youths, the university branch of the Popular Socialist Movement, offered a revolutionary alternative to the FUPI's nationalist bent and eventual embrace of electoral politics. The convergence of these organizations in the mid-to-late 1970s and the early 1980s would lead to the development of the concept of the campus-wide "student strike", characterized by paralyzed academic and administrative operations, negotiations between students and the

[43] Yudkin, ed. *Universidad y (anti)militarismo: Historia, luchas y debates.*

university administration, and student calls for maintaining broad economic access to higher education, which became a part of their public discourse.

The pro-independence student organizations that from the 1940s onward were the main instigators of protest in the Río Piedras campus were often negatively represented by the Puerto Rican press and subject to punitive police surveillance. Cold War anticommunism often influenced the ways that student activism was portrayed by mainstream Puerto Rican press and opinion pieces, which often exaggerated connections students had with counterparts in the Soviet bloc and the developing world. Moreover, Puerto Rican newspapers also routinely framed student activists as a danger to the university and to Puerto Rico as a whole because of their collaboration with pro-independence collectives off-campus who were themselves subjects of intense attacks and surveillance from the 1960s onward.

Across the decades just examined, nationalist organizing had an evolving but crucial impact on pro-independence student activists and the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* as a whole. Most pro-independence collectives that made up the *Nueva Lucha* remained respectful and admiring of Nationalist Party leader Pedro Albizu Campos, firstly demanding his release from prison, and later paying close attention to his deteriorating health until his death in 1965. While in theory the socialist project and the Marxist-Leninist platform that many student radicals came to embrace had little overlap with the economically conservative national project Albizu Campos had led, in practice lines blurred. Sometimes the distinctions played out in divisions among student groups. Some former student activists who were not *fupistas* characterized the FUPI as a nationalist organization in the 1970s. There were internal divisions as well. According to activist and writer Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, the FUPI was marked by the same struggles as the Puerto Rican Socialist Party by the early-1980s, with petite-bourgeois nationalist leadership prioritizing political

independence from the United States and revolutionary workers who advocated for the organization of workplaces.[44] Nationalism's influence was evident but the *Nueva Lucha*'s emphasis on internationalism, the expanded role of youths, and gatekeeping within its ranks nuanced the visibility of its impact. Yet, as this dissertation establishes, the pull of a tradition of culturally conservative nationalist struggle consolidated what became known as the Puerto Rican student movement distinct from its peers in Latin America and North America alike, particularly visible in the Puerto Rican student movement's delay in embracing the new norms regarding gender and sexuality that were highly visible in youth countercultures globally.

Pro-independence student activists, therefore, fed the ranks of various organizations within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* off-campus. The continued militancy of former activists who belonged to the FUPI, the Pro-Independence University Youth, the Union of Socialist Youths and other pro-independence collectives in Río Piedras would push pro-independence organizations Leftward at the national level, as former students continued to participate in protests and electoral campaigns for decades after their time in the university. Nevertheless, most of Río Piedras students went on to pursue non-political professional careers as part of the Puerto Rican middle class, with voting as their primary mode of political action. Diversity in student demographics and political organizing influenced this contradiction between visible political action on campus and long-term political trends in the archipelago more broadly, within which independence has remained a minority position in public debate, instead being dominated by support for annexationism on one hand and continued ELA status on the other.

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[44] Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, *Puerta sin casa: Crisis del PSP y la encrucijada de la izquierda* (San Juan: Ediciones La Sierra, 1984).

1.4 Student Dissent and Compliance in the Río Piedras Campus

This dissertation's third line of analysis focuses on student demographics, organizing and trajectories of campus activism in Río Piedras. I reject the concept of a unified "student movement" to describe mid-twentieth century student activism in the Río Piedras campus. I contend that student organizing in Río Piedras reflected the diversity of its growing student body, though activism was dominated by sectors that opposed the *Estado Libre Asociado*. My study acknowledges that students who became militants in political organizations were a minority of Río Piedras's student body as a whole, even as they faced extensive media coverage and exerted considerable impact on Puerto Rico's political parties and activist circles after they concluded their time in the university. While the term "student movement" was used sporadically across the decades to describe a conglomerate of pro-independence student collectives in the Río Piedras campus, I find that the term did not come into routine use in mainstream political discussions until the early 1980s. To argue the contrary would erase the diversity of activism that the campus saw across the preceding generation. The issues student activists tackled – university reform, anti-ROTC campaigns, student-worker collaborations, and struggles against tuition hikes – reflected both shifting sociodemographic patterns within Río Piedras and changing political panoramas and events within the island and the hemisphere.

Pro-independence student organizing was itself diverse and complex.[45] Women's participation in pro-independence political organizing increased from the 1960s onward, with

[45] Among activist and scholarly writings on pro-independence student activism in the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, see John Henry Baker, *The Relationship of Student Activism at the University of Puerto Rico to the Struggle for Political Independence in Puerto Rico, 1923-1971* (PhD Dissertation, Boston College, 1973); Cacimar Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obrero-estudiantil: Las huelgas 1973 y 1976 en la Universidad de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2015); Luis Nieves Falcón, Ineke Cunningham, Israel

female activists framing themselves as somewhat equal to their male counterparts. Nationalist-influenced organizations dismissed global counterculture and imposed rigorous codes of conduct and academic performance, while radical groups sometimes led students to neglect their studies in favor of political action. Most importantly, this dissertation will show how pro-independence activism from the 1960s through the early 1980s drew populations from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, distinguishing itself from the traditionally elite leadership that characterized nationalist student organizing before the ELA's founding and the university's expansion. Activists who grew up in slums, impoverished rural areas, or government housing went on to become some of the most radical leaders of pro-independence organizations, influencing the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s Leftward turn from the late 1960s onward.

While pro-independence students were the most visible activist contingent in the Río Piedras campus, they were not alone. Opposition to their actions triggered the mobilization of the opposite end of Puerto Rico's political spectrum. Annexationist students organized sporadically in response to what they claimed was a Left-leaning threat posed by pro-independence student collectives from the mid-1960s onward. Episodes of annexationist protest also reflected developments in Puerto Rican politics off-campus, as statehood became an attractive model of decolonization embraced by a broad range of Puerto Ricans from the late-1960s onward. Student organizations like the *Asociación Universitaria Pro-Estadidad* (Pro-Statehood University Student Association/AUPE) and the *Frente Anticomunista Universitario* (Anticommunist University Front/FAU) organized against campus actions they deemed threatening to their annexationist

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Rivera, Francisco Torres, and Hiram Amundaray, *Huelga y sociedad: Análisis de los sucesos en la UPR, 1981-1982* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1982); Fernando Picó, Milton Pabón & Roberto Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1982); David Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta?: La lucha estudiantil en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Puerto, 1972); Pedro Juan Rua, *Resistencia nacional y acción universitaria* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1988); Surillo Luna, *La FUPI desde la otra esquina.*

political project – i.e., the possibility of obtaining US statehood for Puerto Rico. Episodes of protest organized by annexationist students serve as an example of the effects of state support for student activism. Understanding annexationist student organizing is important because it reveals key aspects of the origins of anti-strike rhetoric. Rather than being a "silent majority," my dissertation shows that annexationist students were skilled at organizing and often relied on support from wealthy parents.

While family backgrounds and ties to politicians and groups off campus shaped student activist trajectories, so too did developments within the university itself. The establishment of student councils in 1966 was intended to enhance representation of politically diverse student perspectives within the University of Puerto Rico's institutional units. Reformist faculty and students advocated for the inclusion of such councils in the 1966 University Law passed by the Puerto Rican Legislature. They argued that students were equipped to engage in civic discussions and ought to have formal spaces to voice their worries to the university administration. Student councils at the individual college level and the General Student Council at the campus-wide level became forums for discussions about student affairs, offering official venues for students to express their concerns about institutional problems. Activist student collectives soon capitalized on the potential of student councils to advocate for institutional change, successfully running campaigns in favor of specific student candidates and acquiring the number of necessary votes to fulfill institutional quorums. Student councils also served as a space where radicalized students who were not persuaded by Río Piedras's array of political collectives began their activist trajectories, sometimes transitioning into socialist and syndicalist organizations by the end of their time in the university.

By acknowledging the diversity in student organizing, this dissertation demystifies vanguardist narratives that frame student activists as natural leaders of social mobilization in Puerto Rico from the mid-twentieth century to the present. Not only were pro-independence students accompanied by a large mass of peers who did not engage in political organizing, but the actions of pro-independence collectives were sometimes actively contested by opposing activism within the student body. I demonstrate that Río Piedras's pro-independence student activists understood the limits of the university as an activist space: they fought for concrete, campus-specific goals, rather than abstractions like "revolution". Nonetheless, students' collaborations with off-campus political collectives, and, in multiple cases, transition to militancy within them, points to the importance of university student protests in shaping shifts in public debate regarding Puerto Rico's status.

Today, myths surrounding student activism in Puerto Rico are epitomized by the figure of the *pelú*, a term that conjures up a hairy, dirty student who disregards their studies in favor of participating in protests in accordance with their political convictions. The commonplace caricature hides within itself multiple contradictions. The *pelú* stereotype is often equated to the figure of the hippies in the continental US, but in fact, pro-independence Puerto Rican student activist sectors tended to reject US influences in youth counterculture.[46] Meanwhile, the epithet *pelú* given to student activist referred to the afro hairstyles that became popular in the Rio Piedras scene over the 1970s, as some pictures from the era suggest. This points to an often-overlooked racial component in the stereotype. However, issues of racial diversity are silenced in most accounts of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, which are often narrated by those activists

[46] Raiza Baez Calderón, *Llegaron los Hippies: Representaciones de una contracultura puertorriqueña 1967-1972*. MA thesis, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (2017).

who became part of the Puerto Rican middle class or intelligentsia and who describe their collectives as devoid of prejudice and conflict. Finally, *pelús* existed in a space that was heavily subsidized by Puerto Rico's colonial state, which allowed sufficient liberty for students to use their institutional affiliation to delay entry to the Puerto Rican workforce and continue activist militancy. The *pelú* is but one of the myths related to campus activism that exists in contemporary Puerto Rico, where students have taken a protagonist role in social struggles against debt and austerity. The historical path that led to such focus is illuminated in the pages that follow.

1.5 Chapter Descriptions

Chapter 1 covers the period from 1952 to 1959, from the establishment of the *Estado Libre Asociado* to the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. It argues that increased access to higher education over the 1950s, including that of veterans returning from the Korean War, brought socioeconomic diversification to an institution that was formerly out of reach for students from low-income families. The first part of the chapter summarizes nationalist mobilizations from the late 1940s and their impact on political activism in the Río Piedras campus over the next decade. The second and third parts analyze statistics on student demographics and everyday life on campus, respectively, to show how the diversification of the student body by class, region, etc., began shaping radicalism in new ways. The fourth part explores the emergence of the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (Federation of University Students for Independence/FUPI), showing how the 1950s were a transitional period for political activism in the university, shaping the ways that student participation would take in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* from 1959 onward. The fifth part explores early student support for the Cuban Revolution in Río Piedras,

which would be carried into off-campus organizations as individual *fupistas* and other pro-independence students graduated or otherwise moved out of campus organizing.

Chapter 2 reconstructs processes of radicalization and university reform in Río Piedras from 1960 to 1966. It explains how debates over Puerto Rico's political status, amid an intensified hemispheric and global Cold War, polarized and radicalized student groups within the university community as they strove for university reform. The first part uses ROTC publications from the early 1960s to demonstrate that military education remained a central part of student life in Río Piedras even as pro-independence student activism became more visible. The second part analyzes the FUPI's growth and radicalization as it became connected with the MPI and supported the MPI's electoral boycott. More traditional nationalist influences were still strong within the FUPI, however, and continued being key to its rhetoric and actions. The final section delves into the development of the 1966 University Law, focusing on student actions regarding the process, which showed tensions between various sectors within the university community and created conditions necessary for the intensification of anti-ROTC activism on campus.

Chapter 3 explores the escalation of campus conflict from 1967-1969, the first phase of what I call the ROTC protest period. It argues that struggles surrounding ROTC in Río Piedras mirrored wider transformations across Puerto Rico's political spectrum, which included the beginning of a two-party dynamic between pro-ELA and annexationist (pro-statehood) politicians. In the context of the Vietnam War and the expanding draft, campaigns against ROTC helped create impetus and unity among the at times fractious allies of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* on campus, as anti-war activism became a common cause for most pro-independence student collectives. Meanwhile, administrative tolerance towards activism in Río Piedras was ironically encouraged by the increasing mobilization of pro-ROTC sectors of the university community. The

first part discusses the initial escalation of anti-ROTC struggle in 1967, which responded both to a fear of the draft and political turmoil off-campus as pro-ELA sectors became divided over the mid-1960s. The second part discusses Río Piedras's long 1968, which did not follow global trends of large-scale protest, instead setting the groundwork for future student-worker collaborations and deeper *fupista* incursion in the *Nueva Lucha*. The third part analyzes three instances of protest that occurred in 1969: the arson of Río Piedras's ROTC building, a hunger strike, and a parents' march in support of military education. Together, these demonstrate the diversity of ROTC-related protest on campus. The final section discusses the dismissal of Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González, which changed the way the Puerto Rican government approached the university administration, as leaders and elected officials began taking party allegiance into account as a factor in administrators' tenure.

Chapter 4 studies the culmination of the ROTC protest period and the rise of student activists' increasing involvement in student-worker organizing from 1970-1976. The first section tracks how annexationist administrators' choice to rely on police intervention on campus in response to anti-ROTC protest in 1970 and 1971 weakened administrators' stance countering pro-independence student organizations, leading to the eventual removal of ROTC training and parades from campus grounds. The second part explores fractures within pro-independence student organizations that mirrored the growing ideological divisions and organizational disagreements among factions of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. The third part analyzes Río Piedras's strike of 1973, the first in which students attempted to paralyze university operations indefinitely, inspired by workers' actions both on and off-campus. The transition from anti-war protest toward syndicalist organizing partly responded to changes in the MPI, which became the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in 1972 and began framing workers as a vanguard of revolutionary struggle in

Puerto Rico. The fourth part explores student collaboration in a 1976 university workers' strike, as marked divisions within pro-independence student organizations became visible whilst the university was rocked by the impact of student and worker mobilizations, archipelago elections, and economic recession.

By the end of 1976, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party suffered a crushing electoral defeat and most Leftist sectors of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* became increasingly fractured. Chapter 5 focuses on a student strike against tuition hikes that occurred in 1981. It maintains that this conflict was a pivotal moment in trajectories of activism in the Río Piedras campus, which from that point forward would be framed around struggles in favor of access to higher education. The first part of the chapter depicts how pro-independence student organizations lost their impetus on campus with the weakening of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* after electoral defeats in 1976. The second part explains how tuition hikes became a unifying cause that brought pro-independence organizations together with groups that were not usual actors in student mobilizations, such as Christian student groups. The 1981 strike would become an almost five month-long shutdown of academic and administrative activities in Río Piedras supported by students who did not participate in pro-independence organizing. The third part analyzes how a combination of an intransigent administration, police repression and a government eager for visible opposition for the strike led to this becoming the lengthiest conflict in the history of the University of Puerto Rico. The final part evaluates strike leaders' growing flexibility with strategies and negotiations, which while creative and highly strategic were insufficient to make the strike succeed.

Viewed as a whole, the trajectories of mid-twentieth century student activism in the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus elucidate how shifting class dynamics influenced

opposition to the *Estado Libre Asociado*. The enhanced demographic heterogeneity in Río Piedras students, resulting from the expansion of socioeconomic mobility, influenced anti-colonial rhetoric and actions staged on campus during this period. Yet at the same time, the expansion of the Puerto Rican middle class also hindered the persuasive power of agendas denouncing the status quo, as higher education put opportunities and comforts at the reach of Río Piedras students. The university would come to embody this contradiction and reflect the successes and failures of the ELA as a political project due to its dependence on the Puerto Rican government. The campus was equally prominent as a setting for the development of the ELA's cultural initiatives and protests against Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States.

But political student organizations in Río Piedras went beyond mirroring developments in off-campus collectives. Rather, student activists were active participants in the evolution of pro-independence and annexationist politics in Puerto Rico. Trajectories of activism and careers in party politics begun in campus organizing still influence the ways the archipelago navigates US colonialism and debates Puerto Rican pasts and futures. Some pro-independence leaders became professors or university administrators due in part to the flexibility in university discipline and policies, and opportunities granted by the ELA. Their being part of the elite structures they criticized as students has sometimes limited narratives on Puerto Rican politics and society. Gatekeeping promoted by pro-independence intellectuals and activists at times results in the development of discourses that glorify or exaggerate the impact of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* in the mid-twentieth century. By engaging critically with the trajectories of campus conflict over that period, this project centers the nuanced dynamics that influenced both successes and failures in opposition to the ELA project. My analysis of factors that influenced student lives

in the Río Piedras campus speaks to the university's role in the transformation of individual and collective approaches to the futures Puerto Ricans envision for themselves and their nation.

2.0 Chapter 1 – Questioning the Golden Era: Growth and Diversity in the Río Piedras Campus, 1952-1959

1952 was a pivotal year in Puerto Rican history. The US Congress accepted the ratification of a constitution designed by local politicians and supported by archipelago inhabitants via referendum. On July 25, Luis Muñoz Marín, Puerto Rico's first democratically elected governor, proclaimed the archipelago an *Estado Libre Asociado* (Associated Free State/ELA). The ELA status appeared to be the culmination of years of struggle to formalize Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, which up to that point had direct intervention from the US Executive branch. The US territory now had a government with limited power over local issues and autonomy to have an international presence similar to that of an independent country.[47] Governor Muñoz Marín worked alongside federal authorities to turn Puerto Rico's close engagement with the United States into a model of development for its Latin American neighbors. Elections had a high voter turnout, the archipelago's industrial economy expanded due to Operation Bootstrap's tax breaks for US-American companies, and the nation invested heavily in its education system. Puerto Rico's status as a US colony appeared resolved as the United Nations soon removed the archipelago from its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.[48]

The ELA was born, however, in a period of pro-independence strife. In 1950, nationalist Puerto Ricans rose in armed revolt, demanding that the United States recognize Puerto Rico as its

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[47] Fernando Picó, *Historia general de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2008), 295-296; Evelyn Vélez Rodríguez, *Puerto Rico: Política exterior sin estado soberano, 1946-1964* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Callejón, 2014).
[48] Operation Bootstrap was a set of government initiatives that gave tax breaks and other local incentives to US industries for them to settle in Puerto Rico and employ its population. The development of an industrial economy in the archipelago greatly improved the livelihoods of many Puerto Ricans who soon found themselves members of a new middle class notwithstanding salaries being lower than in the US metropole.

own republic. Though Nationalism was the most explicit opposition to the then hegemonic and eventually pro-ELA Popular Democratic Party, the revolt occurred after the Nationalist Party had been electorally defeated in the early 1930s. The Nationalist Insurrection occurred in multiple parts of the big island with the participation of around 140 people, as Blanca Canales declared the town of Jayuya an independent republic for around thirty-six hours. After five militants tried to invade the Fortaleza, Puerto Rico's executive dwelling, Governor Muñoz Marín activated the National Guard, rapidly crushing the rebellion.[49] Soon after, the archipelago government implemented Law 53, better known as the Gag Law, which limited freedom of expression with regards to opposition to the US government. Despite this, resistance continued, with pro-independence Puerto Ricans participating both in archipelago elections and clandestine armed struggle pursued in the diaspora. Washington DC became the setting of nationalist attacks, as Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola joined the Nationalist Revolt by attacking the Blair House in 1950, and activist Lolita Lebrón led three armed accomplices as they assaulted the US Capitol in 1954. While the majority of Puerto Ricans supported the ELA, tensions caused by the small pro-independence factions influenced the way institutionalized power in Puerto Rico managed public institutions over the 1950s.[50]

The University of Puerto Rico was one of the spaces where state projects for the archipelago's socioeconomic development were the most contentious. The university's flagship Río Piedras campus also felt the impact of nationalist-led protest. Radicalized students led a strike in favor of freedom of expression in 1948, after the university administration denied permission to use Río Piedras's theater to host nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos. Administrators expelled

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[49] Miñi Seijo Bruno, *La insurrección nacionalista en Puerto Rico, 1950* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1989).
[50] Ibid, 292-296; César Ayala & Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 160-167; Ché Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico: Una lucha por la soberanía e igualdad social bajo el dominio estadounidense* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2017).

student leaders and resorted to police intervention to constrain protests. The event led to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) examining the university's treatment of its students, faculty, and administrators. The ACLU's investigation ruled in favor of the administration's management of the 1948 strike. This emboldened popular support for Chancellor Jaime Benítez, who was allowed to keep his stronghold over the university and continued pushing his own Liberal Arts approach to Río Piedras's academic and social scenario over the following seventeen years.

Responding to these nationalist mobilizations in Río Piedras, Chancellor Jaime Benítez implemented his *Casa de Estudios* (House of Studies) philosophy to advance the institution's growth and development.[51] The *Casa de Estudios* called for a university devoid of political action, limiting discussion about politics to in-class discussions for educational purposes.[52] The approval of amendments to the University Law in 1949 and the General Student Rulebook developed in the aftermath of the 1948 strike virtually banned political organizing in the Río Piedras campus. Some faculty continued having pro-independence sympathies, becoming some of the major critics of Benítez's policies. Though Chancellor Benítez succeeded in increasing the number of students at the university and improving the quality of its education, some sectors were concerned about his overreach with regards to academic affairs and/or his relationship with the Puerto Rican government.

A group of Río Piedras's student body dissatisfied with the *Casa de Estudios*, and the ELA more broadly, organized the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (Federation of

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[51] Isabel Picó de Hernández, *Los estudiantes universtiarios y el proceso político puertorriqueño, 1902-1948*, PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1974; Pablo Navarro Rivera, *Universidad de Puerto Rico: De control político a crisis permanente, 1903-1952* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2000).

[52] María Elena Rodríguez Castro, "La década de los cuarenta: De La Torre a las calles," in Silvia Álvarez Curbelo & Carmen Raffucci, eds. *Frente a La Torre, Ensayos del centenario de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1903-2003* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2005), 132-175.

University Students for Independence/FUPI) united by their demand for the end of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States. Most of these youths had not taken part in nationalist mobilizations, as they were admitted to the university after 1950. Founded in 1956, just eight years after the 1948 strike, the FUPI would soon become a key exponent in the emergence of Puerto Rico's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* (New Struggle for Independence).[53] But activism in the Río Piedras campus went beyond pro-independence organizing during the 1950s. Faculty and students rallied their forces in favor of university reform and voiced their concerns regarding the institution's relationship to the state that funded it. Desire for change went beyond pro-independence sectors, as some annexationist (pro-statehood) and pro-ELA sectors also differed with Benítez's approaches. Indeed, activism in Río Piedras did not end amid what many claimed were the *Casa de Estudios*' repressive rules and the ELA's civic education projects intending to create a docile workforce. Calls for Puerto Rico's independence in the university setting acquired an anti-electoral bent via the FUPI, growing out of a diversifying student body impacted by experiences in the Korean War, urbanization, and enhanced socioeconomic mobility.

This chapter argues that the ELA's first eight years were a transitional period for student activism in the Río Piedras campus, as new students brought novel perspectives anchored in the rejection of Puerto Rico's new political status. Students would organize with both social and political motivations, participating in leisure activities and organizing in favor of university reform. As the ELA embraced cultural nationalism to solidify popular support, Chancellor Benítez kept calling for a Western civilization-inspired Liberal Arts model for the archipelago's higher education. Though enjoying support from most of the university community, Chancellor Benítez's vision also stirred controversy across Puerto Rico's political spectrum, with pro-independence

[53] Gricel M. Surillo Luna, *La FUPI desde la otra esquina* (San Juan, 2006).

activists claiming the university was enmeshed in a "crisis" and pro-ELA politicians arguing that Benítez went against the lines of their incumbent political party. Meanwhile, Benítez's steadfast promotion of *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy) in lieu of support from some sectors of the Puerto Rican government led to claims that the chancellor embraced annexationism. Calls for university reform in Río Piedras were emboldened by administrative strife and university-state tensions, rather than being part of larger agendas for the archipelago's liberation.

A time considered to be the "golden age" of Puerto Rican higher education thanks to Chancellor Jaime Benítez's undying drive to expand the archipelago's public university system also saw the growth of pro-independence student organizing with support of militants off-campus. As the independence movement recovered from the effects of clandestine action both in the archipelago and abroad, pro-independence student activists drew away from nationalist calls for revolution. They came to emphasize institutional demands in Río Piedras and adopted an anti-electoral approach to Puerto Rican independence. As the FUPI grew in Río Piedras and revolution began in the neighboring island of Cuba, Puerto Ricans who favored breaking relations with the United States would enter a new phase in the struggle to decolonize Puerto Rico. As a whole, this chapter sheds light on the varied student groups and dynamics at play in Río Piedras during the 1950s, paving the way for university reform and pro-independence student activists becoming key actors in the archipelago's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* from 1959 onward.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section summarizes important events in nationalist student organizing in Río Piedras during the 1930s and 1940s. Nationalism served as the main opposition to the Popular Democratic Party, which would soon become the ELA's main champion. The university administration's harsh disciplinary measures against student protesters after a strike occurring in 1948 would transform not only the way activism played out in Río

Piedras, but the entirety of student life. The second section explores the Río Piedras campus' demographics from 1952 through 1960. It argues that the university's growth went beyond increased enrollment, with students coming from more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Women, veterans, and youths from rural municipalities all came together in the rapidly expanding Río Piedras campus as higher education became a necessary ticket into middle class life in the archipelago. The third section explores student life in Río Piedras from 1952 through 1959. It explains how military participation shaped Río Piedras's student culture, with mandatory ROTC training for male pupils and demographic changes caused by the Korean War and returning veterans. Student organizations were largely apolitical during this period, encouraging student leisure and collaboration with the university administration along the *Casa de Estudios*' lines.

The remaining two sections analyze the birth of a new phase in pro-independence student organizing in Río Piedras during the mid-to-late 1950s. The fourth section discusses the emergence of the FUPI and its early actions in the Río Piedras campus. It argues that the FUPI's pro-independence origins and consistent framing of university affairs as being influenced by Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States differentiated it from other student organizations on campus. The fifth section lays out the influence of the Cuban Revolution in the FUPI's early organizing in Río Piedras. It explains how Cuba's revolutionary efforts inspired students to organize beyond institutional matters, adopting an anti-imperialist rhetoric that leaders would take off-campus as they transitioned into the ranks of organizations that would come to be identified with the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. The entirety of this chapter complicates existing narratives on the 1950s as a repressive period in the Río Piedras campus by showing the complex set of social and political dynamics that shaped student organizing at the university even before

pro-independence student activism became more visible within Puerto Rico's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.

2.1 Nationalist Student Organizing in the Río Piedras Campus During the 1930s and 1940s

In 1933, students across Puerto Rico went on strike to protest government actions in the archipelago's public university. These actions, however, had conservative, rather than progressive motivations. Students were protesting the naming of Socialist Party member Rafael Alonso Torres to the University of Puerto Rico's Board of Trustees and demanding his removal. The then-elite student bodies of the university's two campuses in Río Piedras and Mayaguez took their claims to the streets, expanding protests to high schools and making university issues a subject of national scrutiny.[54] Fifteen years later, protests erupted in the Río Piedras campus, this time led by nationalist students. By demanding the removal of an administrator again, student activists in 1948 proved their political imaginary was far wider and radical in comparison to their 1933 counterparts. Student activists in 1948 framed their demands as connected to the acquisition of civil and political liberties that could only be achieved in a decolonized Puerto Rico. Campus mobilizations in 1948 occurred while some local politicians abandoned their pro-independence stance in favor of changes in the archipelago's relationship with the United States. The 1948 strike affected the ways the university administration tackled student dissent as the university imposed stricter disciplinary

[54] Jorell Meléndez Badillo, "Strike Against Labor: The 1933 Student Mobilizations," in Meléndez Badillo, *The Lettered Barriada: Workers, Archival Power, and the Politics of Knowledge in Puerto Rico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

measures and changed the norms that dictated everyday life in the Río Piedras campus over the 1950s and early 1960s.

This section summarizes nationalist students' main actions in the Río Piedras campus over the 1930s and 1940s. A pillar of resistance in favor of Spanish-speaking instruction due to faculty-led efforts was later recognized by nationalists as a possible arena for youth radicalization and recruitment. As political parties reorganized and local and federal authorities renegotiated Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, nationalist sentiment grew in the Río Piedras campus. Protests occurring in 1948 represent the peak of nationalist radicalism in Río Piedras, mixing demands regarding political expression on campus with institutional demands related to the resignation of the Chancellor and the reinstatement of expelled students. As the university administration resorted to police intervention and harsh institutional discipline to curb protests, actions in Río Piedras became exemplary of the tensions existing in Puerto Rican society between populations that supported the archipelago's sovereignty while connected to the United States and nationalist sectors that wanted independence no matter the cost. Overall, this section analyzes the main factors that differentiated nationalist student organizing in Río Piedras from developments occurring after the emergence of Puerto Rico's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.

According to political scientist Isabel Picó de Hernández's pioneering account, written in 1974, the Nationalist Party initially dismissed the university's potential as an activist space. Even as pro-independence sentiment grew in Río Piedras, Nationalist Party leader Pedro Albizu Campos argued that students ought to focus on their studies and prepare to be intellectual leaders of a free Puerto Rico. Two events triggered a shift in Nationalist Party policy regarding the role of youths in the struggle for independence: firstly, electoral defeat in the 1932 election, secondly, the death of a student during a protest in the Puerto Rican Capitol that same year. The Nationalist Party went

from solely demanding allegiance from university students to preparing them for potential martyrdom in the name of Puerto Rican liberation.[55] Nationalist perspectives were not foreign to the university, as some faculty had previously organized to teach in Spanish rather than English, which they claimed was the language of Puerto Rico's imperial oppressor. The university's Hispanic Studies (Spanish) Department and professors exiled in Puerto Rico due to the Spanish Civil War played an important role in this struggle. As the Puerto Rican legislature approved a new university law in 1942, Spanish became the official language of instruction thanks to the leadership of newly instituted Chancellor Jaime Benítez. An advocate of university reform, Benítez's initially tolerant leadership, coupled with student radicalization driven by nationalist sentiments, contributed to larger and more visible student demonstrations during the mid-to-late 1940s.

The events that comprised the 1948 strike actually began in December 1947, after three nationalist students were expelled after forcefully raising the Puerto Rican flag on the university tower's main flagpole. The US-American flag was the only banner flown in Río Piedras in a regular manner, but Chancellor Benítez had previously authorized flying Puerto Rico's national flag in commemoration of the *Grito de Lares*, Puerto Rico's single armed uprising against Spanish rule. Still, it never replaced the US-American flag in the university tower, Río Piedras's most iconic building. Student activists' unauthorized lowering of the US flag to raise Puerto Rico's national flag was in honor of nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos' return to the archipelago after being released from federal prison. These actions led to the suspension and later expulsion of General Student Council president Jorge Landing, Juan Mari Brás, and José Gil de Lamadrid.

[55] Isabel Picó de Hernández, *Los estudiantes universitarios y el proceso político puertorriqueño* (PhD dissertation, Political Science Department, Harvard University, 1974), 168-170.

According to pacifist US-American activist Ruth Reynolds, who traveled to Puerto Rico to investigate and denounce these events at the time, the expulsions were illegal, unprecedented with regards to disciplinary norms in Río Piedras, and the first punitive actions of Jaime Benítez's tenure as chancellor.[56] Later in the strike process, Landing, Mari Brás and Gil de Lamadrid faced arrest on charges of inciting a riot. Suffering few judiciary consequences, they would later become leading figures in Puerto Rico's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, which would carry on a nationalist legacy notwithstanding its sympathies with Left politics and Third World liberation movements.

But the major trigger in forging protests in 1948 occurred months later, in April, when the university administration denied a student request to use the university theater. The General Student Council, which had been taken over by students with nationalist sympathies, wanted to host a talk by Pedro Albizu Campos regarding the United Nations' treatment of Puerto Rico's status. Chancellor Benítez argued that the event, which would occur less than a year after Albizu Campos's release from prison, would be political rather than academic. Albizu Campos remained a popular figure among sympathizers with Puerto Rico's independence, and among youths who saw him as an example of militancy and sacrifice. The nationalist-led Student Council was able to fuel broad dissatisfaction with Chancellor Benítez's administration in the aftermath of this decision.

Following nationalist calls for direct action, an unauthorized student assembly ratified a one-day strike vote to protest the previous expulsions, the denial of permission for Albizu Campos's lecture, and the student Rules and Regulations in place in 1948, among other issues. On

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[56] Ruth M. Reynolds, *Campus in Bondage: A 1948 Microcosm of Puerto Rico in Bondage* (New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, 1989), 71.

April 14, the broader student body appeared supportive, picketing on campus and refraining from attending classes. Activist leaders added demands for the dismissal of the Chief of the University Guard and for the recognition of a Student Commission appointed by the Student Council to work out difficulties with the chancellor. As protests intensified during the stoppage, dozens of protesters reached the chancellor's office to demand his meeting with the Student Commission. Benítez authorized police intervention and announced the closure of the university to avoid additional violence, resulting in students declaring a truce one day after the strike began. While there was talk of striking indefinitely to demand Chancellor Benítez's resignation, student activists seemed more concerned with the continuation of their studies than with the political implications of their mobilizations.

Still, student activists continued calling for expanded freedom of expression in Río Piedras and the reinstatement of their suspended peers, whose numbers rose to almost thirty in the aftermath of the April 14 stoppage. They combated university messaging by allotting their limited funds to pay for cars with loudspeakers that traveled across the big island for twelve days, making their perspectives heard to counter university and media versions.[57] Classes restarted on May 7 with substantial police presence intended to constrain mobilizations after clashes between student activists and law enforcement in Río Piedras. Student activists' final strategy was to boycott final examinations demanding Chancellor Benítez's resignation, but the action backfired as the lowering of student GPAs led to suspensions for academic deficiencies and decreased support for the nationalist-led campaign. Actions ended during the 1948 fall semester, as the administration preventively suspended students for potential participation in protests. Forty-eight students faced judicial injunctions, barring them from entering campus. Additionally, calls for a second one-day

[57] Ibid, 127.

stoppage demanding Benítez's resignation managed to achieve the participation of only five hundred out of around four thousand students.

Accusations of police brutality and the expulsions and suspensions resulting from protests in the 1948 spring semester led to an investigation by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). It determined that civil liberties had not been violated in Río Piedras, accepting administrative arguments regarding the university's right to preserve normal academic activities and discipline student behavior on campus. The Middle States Association also paid close attention to events in Río Piedras, putting the university's accreditation under scrutiny. Some subsequent accounts claimed that Frank Bowles, the Columbia University-based administrator in charge of the Middle States' evaluation, developed a personal relationship with Chancellor Benítez that kept him from siding with student activists.[58] While some university professors saw the expulsion of student leaders as excessive, Benítez's overall popularity went up after the 1948 strike with the majority of students, faculty and parents agreeing with his handling of the events.[59] Chancellor Benítez's success in navigating the ACLU and Middle States' investigations while maintaining popular support speaks both to his skill as an administrator and to Puerto Rico's emphasis on higher education as a means of socioeconomic mobility. Nationalist anger at the Popular Democratic Party's abandonment of its initial pro-independence stance was not enough to rally popular support for Río Piedras's student activists in a rapidly changing post-war Puerto Rico.

While the protests of 1948 are routinely labeled as a student strike, they played out differently than subsequent mobilizations from the 1970s onward. Rather than striking indefinitely, students approved single day stoppages in protest of administrative policies and discipline. The

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[58] Pablo Navarro Rivera, *Universidad de Puerto Rico: De control político a crisis permanente, 1903-1952* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2000).
[59] Mary Frances Gallart, *Jaime Benítez y la autonomía universitaria* (San Juan, 2011), 30-39.

university's closures were administrative, intending to both preserve student safety and weaken the impact of student actions by emptying the Río Piedras campus. Meanwhile, the demonstrations' consequences were the opposite of what activists had sought. Chancellor Benítez acquired more power as the University Law was amended in 1949. Rules and regulations became stricter for students, as the approval of a new General Student Rulebook imposed stricter punishment for unauthorized student meetings and protest. The university administration did not allow students to vote for new leadership via a General Student Council to replace the 1948 leadership expelled due to the December 1947 flag protest. Political student organizing diminished greatly as the university embarked in expansion plans with a new political status for the archipelago from 1952 onward.

Student leader Juan Mari Brás would leave Puerto Rico after being expelled to finish his Law degree at the American University in Washington DC. Even before the university began considering appeals to disciplinary processes in the aftermath of the 1948 strike, rumors surfaced regarding Chancellor Jaime Benítez's influence in facilitating the continuation of expelled students' degrees outside Puerto Rico. By the mid-1950s most students who asked that the university reconsider their expulsion were readmitted. Despite this, they returned to an institution with different demographics that spoke to Puerto Rico's rapidly developing economy and powered different forms of radicalization divorced from Nationalist Party agendas.

2.2 Expansion and Diversification: Student Demographics in Río Piedras, 1952-1960

Sofía Pérez Toledo graduated from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus in 1954. She had just started studying two years prior, engaging in coursework toward a Normal

Teacher's diploma in one of the university's extension centers in Arecibo, roughly an hour away from San Juan. The extension center was set in a high school, as the University of Puerto Rico had not yet expanded to its current system of eleven campuses across the big island. Sofía started teaching in Puerto Rico's Public Instruction System with just a year's worth of General Education curricula before finishing her degree in Río Piedras over the summer. Instead of making the over two-hour long trip to campus from her center-mountains town of Lares, Sofía stayed with her brother, who lived in the outskirts of Río Piedras. Nicolás "Yuyo" Pérez Toledo was a veteran who was able to study in Río Piedras and settle in Puerto Rico's metropolitan area thanks to the GI Bill. With just two years' worth of schooling at the University of Puerto Rico, Sofía Pérez Toledo became one of Lares's elementary school teachers, a participant in the expansion of the archipelago's public instruction system, warmly remembered by many in town as the one person who taught them how to read.

Sofía Pérez Toledo is my grandmother. She was one of twelve siblings, three of whom were able to graduate from college; only Sofía did so without veterans' aid. Her story exemplifies several processes that influenced the diversifying scenario of the Río Piedras campus during the 1950s. The University of Puerto Rico was growing at an accelerated pace during this time as part of the ELA's projects for economic and civic development. Populations that previously struggled to acquire an education altogether were making it to the university. The institution expanded so rapidly that its administration became concerned over its own ability to hire faculty to keep pace, as there were not enough qualified professors in Puerto Rico. Plans were in place to expand the university and to have Río Piedras serve as its graduate and research-focused premier. The campus was also undergoing renovations, with several buildings under construction financed by both local funds and federal grants. Tuition costs were low, and Chancellor Benítez constantly requested

more allocations from the Puerto Rican Legislature for the university's scholarship fund to facilitate access to higher education. In sum, education was a key part of Puerto Rico's state-building projects as it became the world's first and only ELA.

This section explores the University of Puerto Rico's growth during the 1950s, emphasizing the diversification of student demographics in the Río Piedras campus. The university's demographic changes reflected the ELA's development projects, including the expansion of its public education system and industrial economy. During this period, the ELA's economy advanced thanks to tax breaks put forth by Operation Bootstrap and government incentives for the construction of public infrastructure. The growth of Puerto Rico's public instruction system at the K-12 level meant to foster civic virtue accompanied by the publicly funded Institute for Puerto Rican Culture and *Operación Serenidad,* a set of government education initiatives intended to serve as a cultural counterpart to Operation Bootstrap.[60] The growth of the university over the 1950s showed the success of the expansion of public instruction across the Puerto Rican archipelago as a significant amount of youths from rural areas now gained access to higher education. Meanwhile, the Korean War changed the university's gender composition, and returning veterans transformed Río Piedras's socioeconomic makeup. Veterans took advantage of local and federal incentives and enrolled in Río Piedras in record numbers after the war ended, changing the socioeconomic profile of the student body on campus. The university struggled to keep up with Puerto Rico's increasing demand for higher education, as the Río Piedras campus began mirroring the way archipelago society looked more broadly.

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[60] Catherine Marsh Kennerly, *Negociaciones culturales: Los intelectuales y el proyecto pedagógico del estado muñocista* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Callejón, 2009).

In the 1981 strike memoir *Las vallas rotas*, historian Fernando Picó commented that the University of Puerto Rico grew too rapidly over the mid-twentieth century.[61] My research confirms the pace of expansion. Table 1 shows that Río Piedras's regular enrollment went up by 63% over a decade.[62] This occurred even as completing a high school diploma remained challenging in Puerto Rico. According to sociologist Arthur Liebman, writing in 1970, only 25% of archipelago students who entered the first grade were in twelfth grade eleven years later for the 1952-1953 academic year. Puerto Rican high school enrollment was superior to that of other Latin American nations but remained inferior to the United States', which graduated 70% of its students.[63] With regard to higher education, 22% of Puerto Rican students went on to pursue higher education, in contrast with 53% of US-American students.

[61] Fernando Picó, "La huelga socialista en la universidad feudal," in Fernando Picó, Mitlon Pabón & Roberto Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1982), 17.
[62] In the context of the University of Puerto Rico, a "regular" student had a "complete" program of at least 12 credits per term.
[63] Arthur Liebman, *The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 34-40.

Table 1: First Semester Full-Time Enrollment in the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus 1950-1960[64]

Year	Total Enrollment	Regular Enrollment
1950-1951	7846	5510
1951-1952	7393	5161
1952-1953	7158	4834
1953-1954	8469	5701
1954-1955	9258	6355
1955-1956	9922	6991
1956-1957	10307	7525
1957-1958	11576	8410
1958-1959	11654	8385
1959-1960	10529	8733

While 1952 is largely remembered in Puerto Rico as the year of the ELA's founding, for the University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras campus the period reflected other ongoing dimensions of Puerto Ricans' status within the United States. In the institution such aspects were centered on the issue of military service and went beyond the changes occurring in local government structures. Over the course of 1950 to 1953, over 60,000 Puerto Rican men would serve in the Korean War. This pattern was not new: around 18,000 Puerto Ricans fought in the First World War, a number that increased to 65,000 in the Second World War. Most Puerto Rican soldiers were volunteers,

[64] "Matrícula de estudiantes regulares en primer semestre por recintos 1950-1951 en adelante," *Informes estadísticos sobre matrícula, 1950-1958*, Office of the Registrar, University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras campus.

and local politicians used their service to demonstrate that the archipelago was ready for self-determination.[65] Units like the 65th Infantry Regiment, better known as the Borinqueneers, stirred pride in Puerto Ricans both in the archipelago and its diaspora, in this way becoming part of dynamics that shaped both the ELA and the United States. Many families, like my grandmother's, would see more than one member serving in Korea.

The Korean War changed student demographics, reducing enrollment for the first time in the University of Puerto Rico's history. Table 1 shows that enrollment went down over the early-1950s, with 1952-1953, the academic year following the ELA's establishment, having the lowest overall enrollment over a decade. After the war ended, enrollment rose rapidly, with Río Piedras surpassing ten thousand students for the first time during the 1956-1957 academic year. Further, Table 2 shows how the Korean War also changed gender distribution in Río Piedras, with women outnumbering men until the end of the conflict in 1954. Women enrolled in Río Piedras's College of Pedagogy in large numbers, outnumbering men 2,093 to 554 during the 1952-1953 academic year.[66] The percentage of women graduating from high school remained higher than that of women pursuing a university degree.[67] Women were also more likely to withdraw from the university for the second semester and to study part-time. Nevertheless, the expansion of higher education access to Puerto Rican women was real and impactful. Educated working women became an important

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[65] Harry Franqui-Rivera, "Borinqueneers Day and the Korean War in Puerto Rican History and Memory" *Centro Voices* (April 12, 2021), https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/centrovoices/chronicles/borinqueneers-day-and-korean-war-puerto-rican-history-and-memoy; Franqui-Rivera, *Soldiers of the Nation: Military Service and Modern Puerto Rico, 1868-1952* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018); Jorge Rodríguez Beruff & José L. Bolívar Fresneda, eds. *Island at War: Puerto Rico at the Crucible of the Second World War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015).

[66] "First Semester Enrollments, 1952-1953 (By Faculty and Sex)", *Informes estadísticos sobre matrícula, 1950-1958*, Office of the Registrar, University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras campus.

[67] Liebman, *The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students*, 44-45.

part of the ELA's public sector economy as they took jobs as teachers and government employees. Male students, however, became the majority of Río Piedras's students as the Korean War ended.

Table 2: First Semester Gender Distribution of Students in the Río Piedras Campus 1952-1960

Year	Total Enrollment	Male Students	Female Students
1952-1953	7158	3293	3865
1953-1954	8464	4150	4319
1954-1955	9258	4818	4440
1955-1956	9922	5374	4548
1956-1957	10307	5772	4535
1957-1958	11576	6421	5155
1958-1959	11654	6435	5219
1959-1960	10529	5313	5216

As Puerto Rican soldiers returned from the battlefield, many enrolled in Río Piedras to pursue higher education, taking advantage of the GI Bill and additional incentives from the archipelago government.[68] Table 3 shows that veteran enrollment reached its highest point in the 1957-1958 academic year, with 2,771 out of 11,576, or twenty-four percent of students having served in the military. At its peak, veteran enrollment comprised over forty percent of Río Piedras's male students. Most veterans enrolled in Río Piedras's Business College, with some courses being restricted to veteran students in order to meet demand.

[68] Federal Laws 346, 16, 550 and 894, accompanied by Puerto Rico Law 469 facilitated veteran enrollment due to their providing economic incentives.

Though it is hard to delineate the socioeconomic profile of Puerto Rican youths admitted to the University of Puerto Rico in the 1950s, it is fair to assume that Korean War veterans diversified the Río Piedras campus. In his study on the role of the military in Puerto Rican society, historian Harry Franqui-Rivera showed that the Puerto Rican government specifically designed educational initiatives for returning World War II soldiers to use their GI Bill benefits. In the University of Puerto Rico context, the rise in veteran numbers resulted in the expansion of Liberal Arts education.[69]

Table 3: First Semester Veteran Enrollment in the Río Piedras Campus, 1952-1960[70]

Year	Total Enrollment	Total Veteran Enrollment	Veterans with Regular Enrollment	Veterans with Non-Regular Enrollment
1952-1953	7158	981	*	*
1953-1954	8464	1480	869	435
1954-1955	9258	1874	1385	471
1955-1956	9922	2523	1818	444
1956-1957	10307	2607	*	*
1957-1958	11576	2771	*	*
1958-1959	11654	2557	1532 **	517 **
1959-1960	10529	1943	*	*

*** Data unavailable**

**** Data reflects second semester only**

[69] Franqui-Rivera, *Soldiers of the Nation*, 155-156.
[70] "Veteranos matriculados por ley de beneficios a la que están acogidos, por semestre. Recinto Universitario de Río Piedras, 1945-1946 a 1959-1960", *Informes estadísticos sobre matrícula, 1950-1958*, Office of the Registrar, University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras campus.

While Puerto Rico is a small archipelago, its population had grown exponentially since the start of the twentieth century, a pattern mirrored by the university in the 1950s. Regarding the geographic distribution of students, the only information available is a chart with application data for Río Piedras campus during the 1950-1951 academic year. Only eight out of then seventy-nine municipalities had over one hundred students enrolled in the Río Piedras campus. Most students who enrolled in Río Piedras lived in the urban centers of San Juan, Mayaguez, and Ponce, with rapidly developing areas like Bayamón and Caguas also sending large numbers of youths to campus. The large rural towns of Arecibo and Humacao did likewise.[71] While migration to Puerto Rico's urban areas was common thanks to Operation Bootstrap, youths who relocated to Río Piedras for college but then returned to Puerto Rico's rural areas became actors in the expansion of Puerto Rico's primary education system and later its skilled industrial economy with the growth of pharmaceutical industries along coastal areas.

[71] At this time Río Piedras was its own municipality, becoming incorporated into the capital city of San Juan in 1954. Diminished autonomy was one of the factors that would eventually lead to the decline of Río Piedras as an urban sector, becoming one of the most impoverished areas in Puerto Rico notwithstanding the presence of the university.

Table 4: Municipalities With Over 100 Students Admitted to the Río Piedras Campus, Academic Year 1950-1951[72]

Municipality	Total Enrollment	Regular Enrollment	Non-Regular Enrollment
San Juan	745	434	311
Río Piedras	622	361	261
Mayaguez	223	51	172
Bayamón	192	97	95
Caguas	191	95	96
Ponce	156	53	103
Arecibo	128	66	62
Humacao	100	48	52
Enrollment in the Río Piedras Campus	5030	2461	2569

The eight municipalities that sent the most students to the Río Piedras campus contributed forty-seven percent of its total student body, showing that students from rural municipalities, though widely distributed geographically, were able to reach university. Liebman's analysis of higher education demographics in Puerto Rico found that students from urban areas had a higher chance of completing high school and transitioning to university.[73] Notably, most students' high

[72] "Geographic Distribution of Applicants for Admission to the University of Puerto Rico (Faculties of Río Piedras Only), Academic Year 1950-1951", *Informes estadísticos sobre matrícula, 1950-1958*, Office of the Registrar, University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras campus.
[73] Liebman, *The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students*, 41-45.

school diplomas were granted by Puerto Rico's public instruction system, reflecting the limited number of private schools in the archipelago. The geographic distribution of students in the Río Piedras campus sheds light on the wide impact of the ELA's projects for socioeconomic development, which expanded the social mobility of youths from impoverished rural areas.

In sum, the Río Piedras campus grew substantially over the 1950s. Both men and women had higher education within a somewhat equal reach, but the opportunities they had were different. Many men benefited from the GI Bill, which facilitated their tenure as university students, while women capitalized on Puerto Rico's dire need for teachers. While Río Piedras's student population was mostly urban, there were now a substantial number of students from rural areas, some of whom returned to their hometowns and pushed the economic development of Puerto Rico's peripheral zones. Students whose access to higher education was facilitated due to developments brought forth by Puerto Rico's post-WWII economic boom arrived at a campus full of activity where leisure and political discussion intermingled despite repression of dissenting activism.

2.3 Leisure and Politics: The Río Piedras Campus during the 1950s

As we have seen, the 1950s were a period of significant growth in the University of Puerto Rico. Then made up of three campuses and several extension centers across Puerto Rico, the university struggled to keep up with the archipelago's increasing demand for higher education.[74] Chancellor Jaime Benítez, who was based in Río Piedras but had power over the entirety of the university campuses, repeatedly called for additional funding to both expand the institution and

[74] The University's third campus, located in San Juan, was founded in 1950. It had previously been the School of Tropical Medicine and sought to expand the acquisition of careers in health-related fields.

increase the quality of its instruction.[75] Chancellor Benítez framed the university as one of Puerto Rico's most important social institutions, arguing that it played a key role in the development of the ELA's industrial economy and the civic virtue of its electorate. Students learned from rigorous and thorough curricula that emphasized General Education and the Liberal Arts. Life in the flagship Río Piedras campus was not limited to educational activity, however, as students participated in a lively extracurricular scene while interacting with other sectors of the university community in varying ways.

This section explores student activity in the Río Piedras campus from the ELA's founding in 1952 through the 1959-1960 academic year. It questions existing narratives about the impact of 1949's General Student Rulebook in Río Piedras that claim that the limitation of civil liberties in the aftermath of the 1948 strike negatively affected everyday life on campus. Rather, this section contends that Río Piedras had a lively social life with politicized components, due in part to changes in student demographics and to the very debates regarding civil rights in the public university setting that administrators' actions spurred. The *Casa de Estudios*' stronghold over both academic curricula and behavioral norms came into question during the 1950s, as professors and students interrogated its Western civilization approach to higher education in favor of critical analysis of Puerto Rican society and culture. The diversity of student experience and legacies of political organizing in Río Piedras lent themselves to the expansion of pro-independence student

[75] "Señala faltan a UPR fondos suficientes," *El Mundo* (June 7, 1955), 1 & 14; R. Santiago Sosa, "UPR solicita más fondos mejorar operación docente," *El Mundo* (January 24, 1957), 7; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "UPR pide $1,570,000 para hacer reformas," *El Mundo* (February 12, 1958), 14; Homero Alfaro, "Gestionará fondos para construcción casa internacional y otras viviendas," *El Mundo* (October 1, 1958), 1 & 16; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Falta fondos amenaza obras expansión UPR," *El Mundo* (February 4, 1959), 1 & 16; Miguel Salas Herrero, "Rector contra quiten ayuda a Universidad," *El Mundo* (December 8, 1959), 1 & 14.

activism on campus, despite the repressive measures promoted by both the ELA government and the university administration.

Meanwhile, veteran enrollment was not the only way in which the US military presence manifested itself in the Río Piedras campus. Río Piedras had extensive Army and Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC & AF-ROTC respectively) programming, named Military Science and Aerospace Science respectively.[76] Military and Aerospace Science departments used Río Piedras's athletic facilities for drill training and marched across campus daily. As with all ROTC programs in the United States, the University of Puerto Rico had little say over course content, materials or the hiring of its instructors. Coursework was mandatory for all male pupils for their first two years at the university, but few chose to continue pursuing the full program to enlist as officers. Table 5 confirms that most male pupils in their first and second year enrolled in Military Science departments, with the remainder being exempt veterans. Mandatory ROTC training was a contentious topic within the Río Piedras community, as Chancellor Benítez was one of its most ardent supporters and pro-independence sectors considered it to be one of the main markers of US imperialism in the university.

[76] Jorge L. Colón, "Legislación, el ROTC en Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico," in Anita Yudkin, ed. *Universidad y (anti) militarismo: Historia, luchas y debates* (San Juan: Universitarios por la Desmilitarización, 2005) 169-186.

Table 5: Total Enrollment and Commissions Granted by the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus' Military Science and Aerospace Science Programs, 1952-1960

Year	First Year Male Enrollment	Second Year Male Enrollment	ROTC Enrollment	ROTC Commissions	AF-ROTC Enrollment	AF-ROTC Commissions	Combined ROTC & AF-ROTC Enrollment	Combined ROTC & AF-ROTC Commissions
1952-1953	873	*	956	128	808	0	1764	128
1953-1954	1284	*	893	120	979	5	1872	125
1954-1955	1414	*	774	27	746	29	1520	56
1955-1956	1792	1706	618	26	697	22	1315	48
1956-1957	1914	1705	809	35	620	6	1429	41
1957-1958	2358	1792	870	35	741	4	1611	39
1958-1959	2079	2035	754	27	700	6	1454	33
1959-1960	1443	1701	966	0	717	0	1683	0
Total Students Impacted by the Programs				398		72		470

*** Data unavailable**

While male students were required to partake in military education coursework, ROTC training impacted women as well. Young women could join ROTC's ranks as members of the sponsor corps, or *Madrinas* as they were known in Spanish. *Madrinas* were in charge ROTC's social scene and stood in guard with cadets as they were in formation. Though commissions were almost exclusively granted to male students who completed four years of ROTC coursework, there were exceptional cases of women partaking in ROTC's full benefits. Iris Aida Quintana Mediana and Priscilla De Jesús Carrasquillo took advantage of a plan that sought to increase the female population of the US Army's Reserve Medical Corps as they obtained second lieutenant commissions in 1958.[77] According to former FUPI president Norman Pietri, women who joined ROTC as *Madrinas* ended up becoming the most reactionary and conservative members of

[77] "2 graduadas UPR reciben comisión segundo teniente," *El Mundo* (August 13, 1958), 15.

Military and Aerospace Science programs. Enrolling in the program voluntarily, they had stronger faith in ROTC's role in the university and of the United States' part in Puerto Rico's wellbeing.[78] Even as the university was an important institution in fostering the ELA's cultural nationalism, the US military had a visible and undeniable influence in Río Piedras's everyday life.

Since ROTC training was part of Río Piedras's core curriculum, students were required to participate regardless of their personal politics. Pro-independence activists would often cite being forced to engage in drill training as being "taught how to kill." [79] As cadets, they were coerced to stand in guard for the university administration, validating Chancellor Benítez's position as leader of the university community and of Puerto Rican higher education more broadly. Some claimed that federal funds that depended on meeting cadet quotas were the only reason Río Piedras required ROTC training. Pro-independence students and faculty argued that ROTC was an instrument of imperial intervention in Río Piedras, one that demonstrated the ELA's perpetuation of Puerto Rico's colonial situation. Politicized opposition to Military and Aerospace Science coursework did not stop cadets and *Madrinas* from playing a central role in student leisure activities, however, with military balls being a common occurrence in Río Piedras. While Military and Aerospace Science coursework was rapidly politicized by pro-independence student activists over the course of the 1950s, it was not yet the main target of student protest that it would become in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the Vietnam War escalated.

ROTC training was but a component of Río Piedras's rich campus culture during the mid-twentieth century where students came together notwithstanding unauthorized demonstrations and activities being forbidden and harshly punished after 1949. There were institutional mechanisms

[78] Norman Pietri, interview with Aura S. Jirau (in person), Carolina, PR, 2018.
[79] Pietri, interview. Speech by Benjamín Nistal (October 17, 1969) Box 17, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.

that authorized student organizations, encouraging students to socialize for educational and social purposes. For instance, Greek fraternities and sororities had an active presence in the Río Piedras campus during the 1950s, following similar traditions from the United States. The Alpha Beta Chi Fraternity sponsored the *Señorita Universidad* beauty pageant, with university-wide voting for candidates presented by other student organizations. The pageant's justification drew explicit analogy between electing a beauty queen and participating in the ELA's elections, as the pageant supposedly served as practice for democratic exercises.[80] Some interviewees remember fraternities and sororities as controversial organizations, with accusations of elitism, racism and inappropriate behavior during their initiation rituals.[81] For example, fraternity members interrupted tourists who were exploring the Río Piedras campus by throwing detonators and firecrackers in 1959. Then Dean of Students José Gueits claimed that the situation needed to be solved within the fraternities themselves, showing administrative disinterest in disciplining Greek life in Río Piedras.[82] Fraternities and sororities showed both the diversity of student extracurriculars in Río Piedras during the 1950s and the prevalence and tolerance of disorderly conduct in sectors beyond pro-independence student activism.

Despite the breadth of organized activities on campus, students lacked a campus-wide organization to bring student demands to the university's leadership. The administrative response to the 1948 strike had led to the dissolution of the Río Piedras campus' General Student Council. Still, student councils did not stop existing after the 1948 strike altogether. Rather they continued functioning at the college level, but little is known about their relationship to the university

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[80] "Eligen este mes reina de 1952 en Universidad," *El Mundo* (January 22, 1952), 8.
[81] Pietri, interview, 2018.
[82] Homero Alfaro, "Estudiantes UPR arman escándalo frente a la Torre," *El Mundo* (November 14, 1959), 1 & 12; Homero Alfaro, "Harán plan de vigilancia para evitar desórdenes," *El Mundo* (November 20, 1959), 12.

administration. An announcement regarding the leadership body of the College of Pedagogy's Student Council in 1956 claimed that the organization's purpose was to "study bonds of friendship between pedagogy students, to awake student consciousness toward problems that bothered them, to achieve closer engagement between students and the administration, and to cooperate with the administration regarding student issues." [83] The College of the Social Sciences' Student Council remained politically active, protesting in 1953 due to irregularities in their election processes.[84] Law students organized via a student council that called for political change off-campus, protesting against Latin American dictatorships in the late 1950s.[85] Thus, it is clear that student councils in Río Piedras continued to function as both social and politically engaged organizations. Memories of the 1948 conflict, however, kept the administration from accepting calls for a General Student Council.

Chancellor Jaime Benítez used the existence of student councils at the college level to claim he was not opposed to the creation of a General Student Council. Benítez actively spoke against its institution, however, claiming that a radicalized student minority previously abused the General Student Council's power.[86] Activist faculty sectors in Río Piedras went against Benítez and joined student calls for the institution of a General Student Council as part of broader calls for reform in the late-1950s and early-1960s. These professors argued that enhanced participation from students and faculty would improve the university's administration and instill values of good citizenship.[87] A Committee for Civil Rights established by Puerto Rico's College of Lawyers

[83] "Estudiantes de Pedagogía eligen Consejo," *El Mundo* (April 16, 1956), 11.
[84] Rurico E. Rivera, "Grupo impugna elección Consejo de Estudiantes," *El Mundo* (October 9, 1953), 16; Rurico E. Rivera, "Grupo de UPR solicita impugnar nuevo Consejo," *El Mundo* (October 16, 1953), 4.
[85] Juan Manuel Ocasio, "Alumnos UPR combatirán dictaduras," *El Mundo* (March 3, 1959), 7.
[86] Joaquín O. Mercado, "Benítez niega haya faena política en UPR," *El Mundo* (June 30, 1958), 1 & 32.
[87] "Acusa administración UPR descuida sus obligaciones," *El Mundo* (October 29, 1957), 20.

formally recommended that the university be more explicit in authorizing student councils and urged to refrain from censorship of student literature and activities. The creation of a General Student Council in the Río Piedras campus would remain one of student activists' main demands until its establishment via a University Reform Law in 1966.

The 1950s saw an active associational life on the growing campus. While the General Student Rulebook banned political organizing in Río Piedras, students were still able to meet in institutionally recognized organizations for leisurely purposes, some of which engaged with political issues in discussing student representation in administrative processes. The importance of ROTC on campus alongside the evolving engagement of students with Nationalism set the stage for growing tensions. Guidelines regarding unauthorized student groups in the university did not keep students from coming together because of shared ideologies, paving way for a new phase in Puerto Rico's struggle for independence.

2.4 Pro-Independence Student Organizing: Origins of the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia*

Even though the General Student Rulebook approved in the aftermath of the 1948 strike limited demonstrations and organizing to those authorized by the university administration, the mid-1950s were characterized by the growth of political student organizing in Río Piedras. New members of the university community came to Río Piedras without memories of 1948's nationalist-led student strike. Some students, however, arrived with experiences that rendered them dissatisfied with the unequal impact of the ELA's socioeconomic development projects, triggering a new wave of pro-independence organizing in Río Piedras. The *Federación de Universitarios*

Pro-Independencia (FUPI) was founded in October 1956 and soon became the most important political organization in the Río Piedras campus.

1932, the same year the Nationalist Party shifted its policy with regard to student activism, also witnessed the founding of the National Federation of Puerto Rican Students, aligned with the Nationalist Party.[88] The Federation continued existing through the 1950s in the aftermath of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Revolt, likely with diminished numbers due to the implementation of the Gag Law and the university administration's strict disciplinary code.[89] It is probable that the Federation's emphasis on Nationalist Party policy decreased its militants' numbers as the ELA government and the Benítez administration grew more hostile toward pro-independence militancy, but its presence continued intermittently over the mid-twentieth century. The National Federation of Puerto Rican Students would continue existing through the 1970s, at times serving as a starting point in the trajectories of pro-independence student activists.

In contrast, the FUPI was different. It was a constant and very visible presence on campus from the time of its founding onward. It was able to grow in the aftermath of violent nationalist episodes by rejecting both the Nationalist Party's support of armed struggle and the Puerto Rican Independence Party's strictly electoral agenda. Instead, the organization's political discourses intended to demystify notions of sovereignty created by the ELA by making clear that Puerto Rico's political status remained that of a US colony. The FUPI would rally Río Piedras's student body by politicizing institutional demands, using campus-specific issues to criticize the ELA's

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[88] Picó de Hernández, *Los estudiantes universitarios y el proceso político puertorriqueño*, 173; "Constitución de la Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Puertorriqueños" (nd). Reel 1, Ruth M. Reynolds Papers, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.

[89] Though it is hard to delineate the Federation's line of thinking throughout the 1950s, the existence of bulleins published throughout the decade notes that the organization continued existing. "Cablegrama a Panamá" (October 1953). Reel 1, Ruth M. Reynolds Papers, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY; "¡No gratos!" (1953). Reel 1, Ruth M. Reynolds Papers, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.

political structures and relationship to the US metropole. While the FUPI emphasized institutional demands in its early years, it soon became an important agent in triggering the organization of explicitly anti-electoral pro-independence collectives.

This section explores the emergence and early developments of the FUPI in the mid-to-late 1950s. It argues that the FUPI's explicit pro-independence slant differentiated it from other sectors and collectives as its leaders and activists took a proactive role in discussions regarding the university administration and other student issues. Early FUPI concerns and demands show both curiosity in terms of exploring various ways of pursuing Puerto Rican independence and awareness of the limits of student actions in the pursuit of change. Indeed, the FUPI's mainly institutional concerns and its criticisms of the ELA before 1959 illuminate some of the early influences in the Puerto Rican independence movement's transition from Nationalist Party leadership to the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia'*s broad organizing strategies. The FUPI's eventual growth would insert youths into ongoing discussions about the role of higher education in Puerto Rican society, making explicit criticisms about the role the archipelago's political status played in shaping the development of its public university.

A group of Río Piedras students who sympathized with Puerto Rico's independence founded the FUPI in October of 1956. The first edition of *Patria*, the FUPI's first bulletin, contained its initial Declaration of Principles, which claimed that the organization's purpose was to guide the Puerto Rican people, particularly the archipelago's youth, toward the constitution of a free fatherland. The Declaration of Principles also shows nationalist influences on the FUPI at its inception, with its references to spreading respect, admiration, and study of values of "national

and Hispanic" culture.[90] Founding FUPI members Norman Pietri and Luis Escribano differ on the early ideological influences within the organization. Norman Pietri claimed that Socialist League leader Juan Antonio Corretjer was a key influence in the FUPI's early years.[91] Indeed, there is evidence of Corretjer's presence in FUPI demonstrations, and his penning articles for *Patria*. Alternatively, Escribano argued that Corretjer did not collaborate in the FUPI's early actions, and underlined that the organization had a nationalist slant notwithstanding its formal anti-partisan stance.[92] Neither Pietri nor Escribano agreed with fellow founding *fupista* (FUPI militant) Juan Ángel Silén's later statement that the organization became Marxist-Leninist in 1959.[93] Pro-independence rhetoric united the FUPI's membership, and its composition reflected the increasingly heterogeneous student demographics of 1950s Río Piedras.

In an oral history interview, former FUPI president Norman Pietri remembered that the bulk of its early membership emerged from pro-ELA families, as did most Puerto Rican youths at the time.[94] An explicitly non-partisan collective in its early years, the FUPI sought to grow a broad membership united by pro-independence sympathies. Women were among the FUPI's founding members, and *Patria* called females to the organization's ranks by contending that women historically played an active role in the well-being of their fatherland.[95] According to Pietri, there were also veterans among the organization's founding members, as well as some ROTC cadets

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[90] "Declaración de Principios," *Patria* (March 1957), 1. Folder 11, Box 17, Rafael Anglada Papers, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.
[91] Norman Pietri, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), Carolina, PR, 2018.
[92] Luis Escribano, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018.
[93] Juan Ángel Silén, *La Nueva Lucha de Independencia* (San Juan: Editorial Edil, 1973).
[94] In his book The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students, Arthur Liebman argued that UPR students were "children of their parents", meaning that they did not differ from adult voting patterns. In the 1950s, Puerto Rico's political scenario was largely dominated by the pro-ELA Popular Democratic Party, seen as the main force in the development of the ELA. Arthur Liebman, *The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970).
[95] Estrella Rivera Soto, "Compañeras…," *Patria* (March, 1957), Folder 11, Box 17, Rafael Anglada Papers, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.

because, as noted above, all male pupils were required to take Military Science coursework in their first two years. *El Mundo* newspaper reported in 1957 that the FUPI also had chapters in Ponce, the largest city in southern Puerto Rico and home to the archipelago's Catholic University, and in Seton Hall, New Jersey, thus expanding the breadth of its activism beyond the public university's Río Piedras campus.[96] The FUPI's pro-independence and nationalist-influenced early rhetoric did not stop the organization from growing amid university administrative and broader governmental repression triggered by student striking and nationalist clandestine activity.

Patria laid out the organization's early demands, which revolved around institutional issues framed within pro-independence rhetoric. A new, more democratic University Law, representation via the institution of a General Student Council, and opposition to mandatory ROTC training were among the issues initially prioritized by the FUPI. The importance of these issues to the FUPI reflected two dimensions of pro-independence rhetoric. Firstly, the FUPI harshly criticized the ELA as an instrument of US imperialism that fooled Puerto Ricans into believing that the archipelago was no longer a colony.[97] Secondly, the FUPI commented on international case studies, framing them as either similar to Puerto Rico's plight for independence or in solidarity with the archipelago's struggle.[98] This anti-imperial internationalist vision built on ideas of the FUPI's nationalist predecessors, seeking to frame Puerto Rico as part of global liberation struggles. The international dimension of the FUPI's pro-independence activism not only showed awareness of global affairs but would carry student activists beyond the archipelago over the 1960s and the

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[96] "FUPI celebra asamblea alcaldía Río Piedras," *El Mundo* (November 19, 1957), 28.
[97] Vicente Geigel Polanco, "Ventajas de la independencia," *Patria* (May 1957), 2. Reel 1, A la Izquierda Collection, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY; "No hay tal libertad en Puerto Rico, *Patria* (April 1959), 7. Reel 1, A la Izquierda Collection, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.
[98] "Chipre y Puerto Rico," *Patria* (April 1959), 1 & 8, Reel 1, A La Izquierda Collection, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY; "Juventud venezolana repudia coloniaje," *Patria* (April 1959), 6. Reel 1, A La Izquierda Collection, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.

1970s, when *fupistas* became important figures in international student organizations. Still, the organization's concrete actions revolved around institutional issues.

While the FUPI quickly became the most visible activist collective in Río Piedras, its militants were far from the only politically active sector among the campus' student body. In 1957, Governor Luis Muñoz Marín withdrew confidence from Chancellor Jaime Benítez due to disagreements over the university's mission and educational approaches. A group of students from the Río Piedras campus took the matter into their own hands, investigating the situation via interviews of university administrators and government leaders. The group would become known as the "Student Commission," eventually composed of seven regular members, six of whom studied in the Río Piedras campus. There is no evidence of the Commission being explicitly backed by either administrative or governmental forces. Its ability to meet with leading figures in the university and the Puerto Rican government likely stemmed from its explicitly non-political stance, which complied with the widely accepted *Casa de Estudios* rhetoric. The Commission began by interviewing Chancellor Benítez, who contended that his commitment to Puerto Rico's public university was such that he turned down other job opportunities, including an offer to lead UNESCO's educational affairs.[99] To get a perspective from Puerto Rican politicians, the Commission interviewed Governor Muñoz Marín, who expressed his interest in amending 1949's University Law and expanding the student body's political awareness.[100] They also interviewed Superior Education Council president Efraín Sánchez Hidalgo and Council member Gustavo Agrait, both of whom sided with the governor who had appointed them, and argued that the

[99] José Arana, "Benítez reafirma deseos seguir vinculado a UPR," *El Mundo* (August 26, 1957), 15.
[100] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Muñoz cambiaría Ley UPR dentro 2 años," *El Mundo* (August 28, 1957), 1 & 26.

chancellor had abused his power by curtailing the Council's ability to work on university affairs.[101] In contrast, Superior Education Council member and later Río Piedras chancellor Abrahán Díaz González defended Benítez, arguing that the chancellor did not have a political agenda regardless of disagreements on administrative affairs.[102] The Student Commission's commitment to finding the "reality behind the university's situation" sheds light on the complex perspectives regarding the Benítez-Muñoz Marín controversy. Popular admiration for Benítez's ability to grow the numbers and quality of Puerto Rican higher education in the name of *autonomía universitaria* clashed with those who wanted a university that directly served the interests of the party in power. Perhaps most importantly, the Student Commission's work showed that student organizing centered on institutional issues went beyond pro-independence students during the 1950s.

Even though the FUPI had just been founded, it commented on the supposed "crisis" faced by Río Piedras due to tense relations between Chancellor Benítez and Governor Muñoz Marín. Early Student Commission meetings with Chancellor Benítez intended to mitigate tensions between the university and the archipelago government included FUPI members Norman Pietri and Juan Ángel Silén, demonstrating their concern for the impact administrative strife had on Río Piedras's students.[103] There were reports of a "pro-Chancellor Benítez movement" that intended to protest in favor of Benítez's leadership on campus.[104] The FUPI commented on this issue, opposing a call for strike in support for Chancellor Benítez and accused professors of rallying students in protest in the chancellor's favor. The FUPI argued that striking was a drastic step and

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[101] Rurico E. Rivera, "Agrait afirma el rector traicionó reforma UPR," *El Mundo* (September 20, 1957), 1 & 20; Rurico E. Rivera, "Revela se opuso que Rodríguez Bou escribiera sobre situación en UPR," *El Mundo* (September 21, 1957), 1 & 20.
[102] Rurico E. Rivera, "Díaz González censura Consejo por inacción," *El Mundo* (September 25, 1957), 1 & 16; Rurico E. Rivera, "Estudiantes y consejero discuten asunto Rector," *El Mundo* (September 25, 1957), 28.
[103] José M. Ufret, "Estudiantes UPR entrevistan a Muñoz," *El Mundo* (August 27, 1957), 1 & 16.
[104] Rurico E. Rivera, "Uso crespones se extiende al campus de Río Piedras," *El Mundo* (August 28, 1957), 1 & 16.

that the current issue was not serious enough to warrant a conflict like that of 1948.[105] By the 1958 spring semester, disagreements between Chancellor Benítez and Governor Muñoz Marín seemed to have dissipated. Still, polarized opinions both concerning the relationship between the Puerto Rican university and the elected government and regarding Jaime Benítez's performance as chancellor made university reform a priority of the ELA government over the late-1950s and early-1960s.

The FUPI's founding and the Benítez-Muñoz Marín controversy showed the complexities of political organizing in the Río Piedras campus during the 1950s. The *Casa de Estudios* did not achieve its goal of having a university devoid of political activity. Instead, pro-independence student organizing flourished amid pro-ELA politicians' dissatisfaction with the university's leadership. In 1959 the FUPI reported to *Patria*'s readership that a new pro-independence collective had just been founded in the municipality of Mayaguez. Some *fupistas* had been active participants in the first few meetings of that political organization, which would grow into the *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI) and play a key role in the archipelago's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. The MPI would soon emphasize the "student component" as it expanded its anti-imperialist ventures – and would continue to do so until the 1990s. Consequently, the MPI again turned the university into one of the major trenches of Puerto Rico's struggle for independence. At the same time, events in Mayaguez were fundamentally inspired by political transformations outside the archipelago, which in 1959 were enhancing anti-imperialist rhetoric and faith in the Puerto Rico's chances at independence.

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[105] "Cero huelga: FUPI contra la demagogia," *Patria* (September 1957), Reel 1, A la Izquierda Collection, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.

2.5 The Cuban Revolution as a Model of Decolonization for Puerto Rican Students

In 1956, the first edition of *Patria*, the FUPI's first newspaper, included a short metaphorical piece personifying Puerto Rican and Cuban conceptions of nation by using both of their flags. The article, titled "My Flag's Cry", depicted the Puerto Rican flag complaining because it was only displayed once a year, embarrassed because it could not float beside Cuba's. The Cuban flag comforted its Puerto Rican counterpart, stating that it would soon fly freely.[106] This piece is but one of several references to solidarity with the Cuban people included in the FUPI's early literature. Puerto Rican poet Lola Rodríguez de Tió had exemplified the close ties between the two nations in 1893 by deeming them *de un pájaro las dos alas* (two wings of one bird). Pro-independence organizations had long sought to foster solidarity between Puerto Rico and Cuba, identifying similarities with regards to trajectories of colonialism and other forms of inequality. The FUPI participated in widespread rejection of Fulgencio Batista's regime in the organization's early years, by joining demonstrations against his regime and calling for the liberation of a sovereign nation. In January 1959, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution would trigger a new phase in the trajectory of the Puerto Rican independence movement – not just on campus, but with campus actors playing an important role in it – as student activists had noteworthy participation in the development of anti-imperialist and Left-leaning rhetoric within the evolving movement. The triumph of the Cuban Revolution went alongside the rejection of an electoral approach to Puerto Rican independence, triggering the founding of the *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI) and initiating the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* (New

[106] Enio Miranda, "El llanto de mi bandera," *Patria* (March, 1957), 3, 7 & 8. Folder 11, Box 17, Rafael Anglada Papers, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, NY.

Struggle for Independence). Leaders' anti-electoral and increasingly Left-leaning positions owed a great debt to the FUPI's pro-independence rhetoric, reflected in its reaction to the Cuban Revolution.

This section explores the FUPI's treatment of the Cuban Revolution in its early literature. It argues that the FUPI recognized the impact of the Cuban Revolution in the Puerto Rican independence movement. Puerto Rican student activists used the Cuban revolutionary process to propose national liberation through the development of historical-materialist arguments. This approach deviated from Nationalism's emphasis on a distinct Puerto Rican identity, bringing forth an emphasis on labor systems that offered an explanation as to why Puerto Rico had not achieved independence up to that point. This led pro-independence student activists to declare that Puerto Rico's path toward decolonization was ongoing, rather than stalled due to the repression of the archipelago's Nationalist sector. FUPI leaders argued that the industrialization occurring in Puerto Rico over the 1950s served as a step toward national liberation. In addition, support for Cuban revolutionary efforts allowed the FUPI to expand its criticisms of the hegemonic ELA government. Political positioning in favor of Cuba's revolutionary effort was accompanied by student activists traveling to Cuba, where they observed the reorganization of its economy and engaged first-hand with participants in the revolutionary effort. The FUPI's admiration for the Cuban Revolution serves as a case study that evidences Cold War anti-imperialist and Left-wing tendencies influencing Río Piedras's student activists who would soon transition to pro-independence collectives off-campus. Student activists' early interactions with labor systems analysis and international anti-imperialist movements would soon permeate into collectives off-campus. Youths represented at initial meetings that created the MPI, most of whom were *fupistas*, would

take inspiration from the Cuban example to become leaders in the Puerto Rican *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.[107]

The FUPI reacted rapidly to the Cuban Revolution. According to *Patria*, then president and founding member Norman Pietri sent a laudatory telegram to José Puente Blanco, president of the Cuban *Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios* (Federation of University Students/FEU) in January 1959. It congratulated Cubans for the triumph of the revolution, hoping to establish a collaboration with Cuban students through their response and that José Martí's vision for Caribbean liberation would come fully into fruition. In addition, the FUPI's telegram denounced Governor Luis Muñoz Marín's criticism of new Cuban president Manuel Urrutia Lleó for making declarations in favor of Puerto Rican independence.[108] The FUPI called for a response from the entire Cuban student body represented by the FEU in the tradition of Latin American student unions. It was indeed the case that the FEU would eventually gain the ability to send delegates to Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power, representing youths in the new revolutionary government. The FUPI, on the other hand, never encompassed Río Piedras students that broadly or had leverage over the Puerto Rican government: it remained a political organization advocating an agenda for decolonization supported by a small minority of the archipelago's population.

The telegram shows how quickly the FUPI associated the Cuban revolutionary struggle with Puerto Rico's potential for independence. The FUPI's criticism of pro-ELA sectors' opposition to the revolution went beyond the initial telegram to the FEU. *El Mundo* newspaper reported that the FUPI soon criticized pro-ELA sectors "loud complaints when they felt their

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[107] Pietri interview, 2018. Néstor Nazario Trabal, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person) Río Piedras, PR, 2018; Ché Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico Una lucha por la soberanía y la igualdad bajo el dominio estadounidense* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2017).
[108] Norman Pietri "Mensaje a Cuba" *Patria*, year 3, no. 6 (January 1959), 1.

colonial self-determination was violated." In this context, colonial self-determination referred to the ELA's limited autonomy over political affairs. However, the Puerto Rican government used the term to rally sustained popular support for Puerto Rico's political status.[109]

Remarkably, a student did not write the FUPI's first published opinion regarding the Cuban Revolution. Instead, the FUPI gave space to socialist activist Juan Antonio Corretjer. A former nationalist, Corretjer began engaging with Left politics by the late 1950s, later founding Puerto Rico's Socialist League.[110] *Patria*'s newspaper format gave plenty of space for Corretjer to voice his perspective in name of the organization. The choice of Corretjer to comment on the triumph of the Cuban Revolution is in line with the statement given by founding FUPI member and president Norman Pietri, who cited him as an early collaborator in the organization's early actions, in a 2018 oral history interview. Notably, Corretjer also traveled to Cuba and worked personally with Castro's forces, likely after penning his *Patria* piece, exemplifying one of multiple routes that exposed student activists to Left politics before the FUPI openly embraced them in the 1970s. In his 1959 *Patria* essay, Corretjer claimed that the roots of Cuban discontent lay in the Platt Amendment and "Rooseveltian hypocrisy" of the early twentieth century. He argued that the success of the 1956-1958 revolts under the leadership of Fidel Castro was the "liberation of the Cuban spirit" necessary before engaging in collective action to overthrow the Batista government.

Later in the same piece, Corretjer wrote about what he argued was the "peasantry problem" in Cuban society, which he claimed went as far back as the mid-nineteenth century. He argued that

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[109] "FUPI dice independencia está en corazón boricua," *El Mundo* (January 13, 1959), 24.
[110] Corretjer is considered one of the leading figures in the usage of Marxism-Leninism to understand Puerto Rican social movements by both scholars and activists. Beside his writings, Corretjer was known as an activist with the Puerto Rican Communist Party before founding the Socialist League. José Torres & María Ruiz, eds. *El pensamiento politico de Juan Antonio Corretjer* (Morovis, PR: Comité Organizador de Actos Natalicio Juan Antonio Corretjer, 2008).

solving the "peasantry problem" equaled ending feudalism and paving the way for a democratic regime, a process stalled in Cuba while neighboring Latin American nations achieved independence during the early nineteenth century. Corretjer claimed that Cuba's 1956-1958 struggles were the culmination of its peasantry's liberation, a key component for the triumph of the revolution. Corretjer concluded his commentary with a warning that the United States would try to lead Cuba into a single-party regime under the excuse of the development of democracy, drawing an analogy with the then-hegemonic pro-ELA Popular Democratic Party in Puerto Rico.[111] This reflection shows early influences of the theory of the foco and Maoism in the way the FUPI, and the wider *Nueva Lucha,* initially approached the archipelago's decolonization. Former activist Antonio Gaztambide identified those two ideological threads alongside local *nacionalismo albizuista* (Albizu-inspired nationalism) as the main intellectual influences for mid-twentieth century anti-imperialist resistance in Puerto Rico.[112] Notably, even though the FUPI chose a Marxist writer for its first opinion piece on the revolution, the organization itself did not align with that ideology until the mid-1970s.

The FUPI's arguments reached a wider audience thanks to *Claridad,* which would become the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s main tabloid. This newspaper first appeared in June 1959, in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, just three years after the FUPI's founding. One of *Claridad*'s missions was to politically educate its readership to foster patriotic organizing. Along those lines, then-FUPI president Norman Pietri published in *Claridad* in August 1959 his analysis of the Cuban Revolution and the ways it changed Cuban society two months after its triumph. Pietri argued that imperialism and economic factors were the most important roots of the Cuban

[111] Juan Antonio Corretjer, "La Revolución Cubana" *Patria,* 3, no. 6 (January, 1959), 1-2, 8.
[112] Antonio Gaztambide, interview by Aura S. Jirau, San Juan (in person), April 20, 2018.

Revolution. He referenced the Good Neighbor Policy and how the Cuban government had often sought US-American intervention when it found itself in trouble. Pietri also appeared aware of Cuba and Puerto Rico's shared history, demonstrated by his analysis of the *Grito de Lares*, Puerto Rico's first major rebellion in favor of independence, which he discussed as one of the predecessors of the Cuban Independence War. Additionally, Pietri cited the presence of Puerto Rican patriot Juan Rius Rivera in late-nineteenth century Cuban armed struggle to make connections between both nations explicit. Pietri's writings argued for Cuban-Puerto Rican solidarities that went beyond the 1956-1959 events and which predated their relationship with the US after the Spanish American War. This emphasis on the colonial period shows the continuing echo of Puerto Rican Nationalism's stress on Hispanic heritage as well as Puerto Rican thinkers Ramón Emeterio Betances and Eugenio María de Hostos' emphasis on Caribbean solidarity.

Like Corretjer just months before, Pietri relied on historical analysis to call for Puerto Rican support of the Cuban Revolution. After citing the Cuban Independence War, the Platt Amendment, the Batista regime, and the assault on the Moncada Barracks, Pietri maintained that the revolution itself turned into a government after the defeat of Batista's forces. He saw the varied enemies that the Cuban regime faced early in its trajectory as proof of the revolution's success. The FUPI leader concluded by connecting the Cuban Revolution with the Puerto Rican struggle for independence, yet again, reporting that Cubans wanted to help Puerto Ricans with their struggle for independence. Though Cubans were more focused on armed struggles in the Dominican Republic, Pietri asserted that the Cuban Independence War was the dawn of a Puerto Rican revolution given the mortal blow that Trujillo's defeat would mean to US-American imperialism.[113]

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[113] Norman Pietri "La Revolución Cubana" *Claridad* (August 18, 1959), 2-7.

The same column in which Pietri detailed his analysis of the revolution also noted his personal experience in Cuba. Soon after the triumph of the revolution, Pietri traveled alongside other *fupistas* invited by *Casa de las Americas*, one of Cuba's most prestigious cultural institutions. The purpose of their visit was to attend a forum about agrarian reform. The *fupistas* became Fidel Castro's personal guests during this trip.[114] Their interests in agriculture as a means of subsistence strikingly contrasted with the agendas of the Puerto Rican government, which then advocated for rapid industrialization via incentives brought forth by Operation Bootstrap. Industrial labor drew populations away from rural areas and into urban centers, resulting in the decay of Puerto Rican agriculture.[115] Student activists, young and coming mostly from cities, likely had little knowledge about how food production used to work throughout the island. Thus, learning about the development of agriculture would be a crucial asset for the development of an independent, self-sufficient Puerto Rico.

Two months after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, some *fupistas* joined Nationalists and defecting members of the Puerto Rican Independence Party to found the *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI). The MPI's founding would jump-start a new phase in Puerto Rico's struggle for independence, one that would later acquire the label of *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. The MPI would share the FUPI's non-partisan and broad approach during its early struggles, seeking to encompass members with varying visions on how to achieve Puerto Rico's independence.

Being part of a new generation of Río Piedras's student body, *fupistas* and members of other student activist organizations on campus would be active participants in archipelago-wide

[114] Ibid, 2.
[115] Fernando Picó, *Historia general de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 2008), 287-289.

struggles in favor of Puerto Rican independence from the 1960s onward, leaving behind sympathies with the Nationalist Party and armed struggle. Initially sympathetic to Fidel Castro's overthrowing of the Batista's regime, Puerto Rican Governor Muñoz Marín would end up rejecting Cuba's revolutionary effort after it began restricting civil liberties.[116] Support for the Cuban Revolution was hardly universal in the Río Piedras campus, and that solidarity with the Castro rule would become an important point in conservative student organizations' rhetoric against pro-independence sectors.[117] The neighboring island would continue being a referent for Puerto Rico's independence movement, however, even as it distanced itself from nationalists' past advocacy of armed insurrection as a route to independence, moving through an initial anti-electoral stance to eventually acquire the shape of a socialist party participating in local elections. Inspired by, and in some cases with direct connections to Cuba and other Third World struggles, student activists from the Río Piedras campus would become key actors in Puerto Rican social mobilization through the mid-and-late twentieth century.

2.6 Conclusion

While 1952 saw the transformation of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, the largest campus of the archipelago's public university found itself immersed in a transitional period for its activist sectors. The Río Piedras campus's demographic makeup changed due to the

[116] Ángel M. Rivera Rivera, *Luis Muñoz Marín y la Revolución Cubana, 1959-1961* (San Juan: Editorial Patria, 2019).
[117] Frente Anticomunista Universitario. "¿Qué es la FUPI?", circa 1965. Compilation 14: "Student Affairs", AUUPR; "Ni la iglesia se salva," *Decisión: Órgano de orientación ciudadana* 1, no. 5 (February 1970), 1. Compilation 14: "Student Affairs", ACUPR.

Korean War as newcomers to campus expanded pro-independence activism due to dissatisfaction with the ELA government and increasing tensions over the US military's campus presence. Yet, most student organizations in Río Piedras existed for academic or social purposes, and many activist demands directly targeted problems within the university itself. Leaving the legacies of twenty years of clandestine nationalist activity behind, a handful of pro-independence Río Piedras's students came together in 1956 and organized the FUPI as a non-partisan alternative to nationalist-led efforts. Inspired by the Cuban Revolution, *fupistas* would become important actors in the development of Puerto Rico's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* from 1959 onward.

The expansion of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* would transform both the way Puerto Rican liberation movements worked and the effects they had in a university setting during the mid-twentieth century. In fact, developments among pro-independence student organizations would often precede discursive and strategic changes within Puerto Rico's broader independence movement over the next twenty years. Campus activism in Río Piedras would become tightly connected to the archipelago's independence movement as faculty and students in favor of Puerto Rican liberation became the leading voices in efforts to reform Puerto Rico's public university. It happened that Governor Muñoz Marín shared pro-independence sectors' wish for a new University Law that would emphasize Puerto Rican, rather than Western, culture and re-distribute administrative power away from Chancellor Benítez. Adversely, calls for university reform would soon be overshadowed by student struggles against the military presence in Río Piedras, as the Vietnam War made tensions over mandatory Military Science coursework turn into more expansive anti-ROTC activism.

3.0 Chapter 2 – Shaky Grounds for Reform: Debates and Radicalization in the 1960s

In 1969 social scientists R. Fernández Marina, Ursula von Ekardt, and E. Maldonado Sierra published *The Sober Generation*, a groundbreaking study about the mentalities of Puerto Ricans who grew up during the first years of Operation Bootstrap. Describing Puerto Rico as a "magnificent laboratory for social scientific research", the authors used a sample of twenty teenagers who grew up over the 1960s to describe the effects of the *Estado Libre Asociado's* (Associated Free State/ELA) developmentalist policies. They observed caution, prudence, and responsibility as notable traits within the "generation", highlighting that their subjects were neither bold nor spontaneous. Puerto Rican youths, according to Fernández, von Ekard, and Maldonado's perspectives, were committed to their immediacy rather than their future. While this contradicted the main conclusion of their study, the researchers remained hopeful for Puerto Rico's prospects, trusting that foundations laid by the "sober generation" would encourage their offspring to feel secure enough to build an even greater generation.[118] Nevertheless, as they wrote, a portion of the young "sober generation" was rejecting the structures that gave the ELA its initial prosperity.

Academic and journalistic pieces about young people and their prospects published during the 1960s reflected optimism for Puerto Rico, as the ELA status' ratification in 1952 continued economic incentives to manufacturing industries and the middle class expanded. Still, the 1960s were a time of political questioning, shaped by the early signs of the weak sustainability of the ELA's economic prosperity. Puerto Rico's post-1952 economic growth occurred amid unstable

[118] E. Fernández Marina, Úrsula von Eckardt & E. Maldonado Sierra, *The Sober Generation: Children of Operation Bootstrap, A Topology of Competent Coping by Adolescents in Modern Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: University of Puerto Rico Press, 1969).

sources of income, as the labor-intensive light industries initially promoted by Operation Bootstrap left Puerto Rico and the archipelago government initiated a new industrialization policy based on capital-intensive heavy industries.[119] Pro-ELA sectors were internally divided with regards to the longevity of Puerto Rico's status as a territory, with some calling for its renaming to assert legitimacy with the population and others advocating for a transition toward independence or incorporation as a US state.[120] Some annexationist (pro-statehood) sectors questioned the leadership of the land owner-led Puerto Rican Republican Party, due to its economic conservatism in contrast with the industrial bourgeoisie.[121] Meanwhile, pro-independence groups, guided by the recently founded anti-electoral *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI) developed forms of activism outside of party politics, taking arguments regarding Puerto Rico's colonial status to the recently resumed United Nations hearings on the archipelago's status.[122] Notwithstanding these changes in economic policy and realignments among the archipelago's political elites, the Puerto Rican middle class kept growing, reflecting further developments in public institutions and corporations.

Students, faculty, and administrators from the University of Puerto Rico echoed ongoing debates in 1960s Puerto Rico. After a decade of institutional growth and development under the sometimes repressive administration of Chancellor Jaime Benítez, the archipelago's ELA government answered activist students and faculty's calls for a new University Law. Alongside the organized calls for institutional change originating in the university community, Governor Luis

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[119] César Ayala & Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Edgardo Meléndez, *Puerto Rico's Statehood Movement* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1998).
[120] Ayala & Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 173-178.
[121] Meléndez, *Puerto Rico's Statehood Movement,* 83-95.
[122] Ché Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico: Una lucha por la soberanía e igualdad social bajo el dominio estadounidense* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2017).

Muñoz Marín's own disagreements with Chancellor Benítez also played an important role in initiating reform processes. Governor Muñoz Marín wished to decentralize power from the chancellorship while maintaining the state's power over the higher tiers of the university administration.[123] The university community, however, used the reform process to advocate for progressive policies that would democratize the institution's administration and solidify notions of *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy). Reformist sectors argued that faculty deserved a bigger stake in administrative processes, called for an institutionalized mechanism for student expression, and sought to take power over university affairs away from the state that funded it. Students went beyond calls for an institutionalized voice, instead seeking participation in administrative processes, and advocating for the inclusion of a General Student Council under the new University Law. Progressive demands from both faculty and students emerged from sectors with swiftly radicalizing political perspectives.

The *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (Federation of University Students for Independence/FUPI) and the university's ROTC cadets serve as case studies to analyze the polarization of political opinions in the Río Piedras campus. The FUPI, which would become Río Piedras's most visible student political organization, was in its early years, facing accusations of communist influence in an environment that was growing increasingly hostile to Leftist ideologies. Founded by pro-independence students in the Río Piedras campus during the late 1950s, the FUPI began collaborating closely with the MPI by 1964, encouraging student militants and sympathizers to boycott electoral exercises in the archipelago.[124] Meanwhile, ROTC continued introducing its

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[123] Luis González Vales, "Benítez, Muñoz y El Consejo: 'Crónica de un despido anunciado'," in Héctor Luis Acevedo, ed. *Don Jaime Benítez: Entre la Universidad y la política* (San Juan: Inter-American Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2008), 311-363.
[124] Juan Ángel Silén, *La nueva lucha de independencia* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1973)

students to US Cold War military rhetoric, resulting in some cadets' heightened US patriotism and their favoring of direct military intervention in foreign affairs. ROTC enrollment and institutional support remained steady into the mid-1960s, with a lively social life and visible presence on campus. Understanding the influence of the pervasive military presence in Río Piedras, both via veteran enrollment and through ROTC participation, is imperative to conceiving the particular path student radicalization in favor of Puerto Rico's independence took during the early-to-mid-1960s. Emboldened by the intensification of the global Cold War, *fupistas* (FUPI members) and ROTC cadets alike would become more steadfast in their postures, setting ground for years of protest regarding military instruction's place within Puerto Rican higher education.

This chapter analyzes the diverse ways in which students in the early to mid-1960s engaged with Cold War politics in Puerto Rico and the dimensions of institutional reform processes that would affect the ways campus protest played out. It argues that debates over Puerto Rico's political status amid an intensified hemispheric and global Cold War radicalized sectors of the university community in their drive for institutional reform. Both pro-independence student organizations and annexationist groups would clash as they disagreed over proposals regarding the degree of student participation in university governance, and over whether freedom of expression and thought should protect Leftist ideologies as well as less explicitly political ones. ROTC cadets would align ever more firmly with sectors of the Puerto Rican population who viewed the archipelago's relationship to the United States as a motor for economic growth, contributing to the expansion of annexationism as the main alternative to the ELA. Meanwhile, the FUPI would reflect developments within the independence movement, supporting the MPI's calls for electoral boycott. In the same years, institutional reform processes reorganized the university's administrative structures and expanded them to redistribute power, leading to the eventual

acceptance of a General Student Council instituted in the new University Law. All these processes laid crucial organizational groundwork that set the stage for the escalation of campus-focused anti-war student actions as the Vietnam War intensified over the mid-1960s. The US-American government's increasing reliance on conscription to expand its intervention in the Vietnam War during the late 1960s again put Puerto Rico's status at the forefront of concern of public university students with new urgency, leading pro-independence student activists to escalate existing struggles against military education in Río Piedras over the late-1960s and early-1970s.

This chapter will be divided in three parts. The first part examines military education in the Río Piedras campus over the 1960s by analyzing both ROTC and AF-ROTC (Air Force ROTC) student publications. As ROTC courses became voluntary in 1960, cadets would show high degrees of pride and commitment to the possibility of becoming members of the US military, contrasting with the more diverse perspectives represented through mandatory military education coursework in years prior. Some cadets would embrace active and intense anti-communism after taking courses in Military Science, claiming that Left politics were a global danger mismanaged by the US government. Cadets' allegiance to both the United States and Puerto Rico would represent a stark counterpoint to the growth and radicalization of the FUPI and other pro-independence organizations over the 1960s. The second part of this discussion focuses on the expansion of the FUPI in Río Piedras during the early-to-mid 1960s. It shows that the organization's early rhetoric went along the MPI's anti-electoral and internationalist lines, with protests limited to demonstrations in solidarity with the Third World and in favor of university reform. As the Red Scare grew stronger in Puerto Rico, commercial press, annexationism, and anti-Leftist students became more hostile toward the FUPI, labeling it as communist. The FUPI's

actions were mostly defensive during this period, with some secondary involvement in ongoing debates regarding amendments to the University Law in Río Piedras.

The third part summarizes debates regarding institutional reform that would result in a new University Law in 1966. Emphasizing discussions about student participation, this section demonstrates that reformist factions within the university faculty and among archipelago politicians encouraged youths to voice their own concerns with university authorities. Advocating for the institutionalization of a General Student Council, reformist factions within university and government argued that student participation was an assessment of the execution of democratic rights in a free society. However, the consequences of this guarded reform would be as radical, as expected by some supporters of the *Casa de Estudios* philosophy. The Council's return after over a decade of restricted student participation in university affairs would contribute to the radicalization of Río Piedras's student body. The students elected to lead the Council would often sympathize with pro-independence student organizations and mobilize institutional mechanisms to voice dissenting opinions. This institutionalized student expression would become fundamental in voicing calls for the complete elimination of military education from the Río Piedras campus.

The Vietnam War was perhaps the most evident trigger of anti-ROTC sentiment in the Río Piedras campus, with convulsive results at the end of the decade that I trace in Chapter 3. But processes of expansion, reform, and diversification during the early-to-mid 1960s were central in shaping the actions and conditions that would lead to some of the most radical and successful mobilizations in the University of Puerto Rico's history at the end of the decade.

3.1 We Should Be Doing More: Military Education in Río Piedras During the 1960s

The US military had a presence in the University of Puerto Rico from the institution's early years. The Puerto Rican government used Morrill Land Grant Act funding to build the Mayaguez campus, requiring the 1911 creation of a ROTC program in exchange. The university administration also established a ROTC program in the Río Piedras campus beginning in 1919, making the first two years of ROTC coursework mandatory for all male students. Students could choose between an Army ROTC program, known as Military Science, or an Air Force ROTC program, which was founded in 1952 and became known as Aerospace Studies.[125] ROTC cadets became a large and diverse body of students as the University of Puerto Rico grew in the 1940s and 1950s thanks to government investment and economic incentives for veterans via the WWII and Korean War's GI Bills. Reasons to enroll in Military Science and Aerospace Studies ranged from fulfilling a requirement to having a genuine commitment to the United States as a fatherland. Women joined ROTC's ranks as *Madrinas* (Sponsors) beginning in 1959 and became an important component of military exercises and overall socialization for their male counterparts. ROTC programs grew rapidly in Río Piedras, becoming a visible part of everyday life on campus. In 1960, ROTC training became voluntary, but its influence in the university community remained visible. Comprehending the ways military education functioned and how it was described by cadets sheds light on the diverse political ideologies and goals of various sectors of Río Piedras students in the 1960s.

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[125] Jorge L. Colón, "Legislación federal, el ROTC en Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico," in Anita Yudkin, ed. *Universidad y (anti)militarismo: Historia, luchas y debates* (San Juan: Universitarios por la Desmilitarización, 2005), 174.

This section analyzes key events and dynamics in the Río Piedras ROTC programs over the early-to-mid 1960s. It explains the transition from mandatory to voluntary ROTC training and the ways cadets interacted with topics related to world politics and military life. As ROTC coursework became voluntary, ROTC student publications captured both vocational and patriotic aspirations. Cadets' exposure to ideological messaging from the US military led some cadets to argue in favor of strict allegiance to the United States and to enthusiastically advocate for armed combat service. Criticizing what they considered to be a lackluster response to global communism, Río Piedras's ROTC cadets called for direct intervention against Left-leaning governments throughout the world. This trust in the United States' ability to confront its enemies and foster economic development would align with changes occurring in the Puerto Rican political spectrum, as annexationism gained ground at the polls in status plebiscites.[126]

ROTC coursework became voluntary in the university beginning in the 1960 Fall semester. This development owed more to changes in institutional priorities and political transformations off-campus than to pressure from pro-independence activist organizations. Student activists from the late-1950s recall that efforts to make ROTC coursework voluntary was one of the FUPI's earliest campaigns, as *fupistas* argued that cadets were "taught how to kill". However, the transition occurred swiftly, with few student demonstrations or even media attention.[127] In reality, the university was already evaluating proposals for voluntary ROTC curricula, as a result of both student and faculty opposition since the program's inception. Some professors questioned the way

[126] While the pro-statehood Puerto Rican Republican Party boycotted the 1964 plebiscite, young businessman Luis A. Ferré encouraged annexationist to participate in the consult. Ferré would soon find a new electoral alternative to the Republican Party, creating Puerto Rico's present-day two-party scenario with the New Progressive Party.
[127] Héctor Mejías, "Montan piquetes para protestar el curso militar sea obligatorio," *El Mundo* (April 27, 1960), 1 & 16; Norman Pietri, "Estudiantes combaten imposición militar," *Claridad* (May 23, 1960), 1 & 10; Homero Alfaro, "CSE aprueba que el ROTC sea voluntario," *El Mundo* (July 30, 1960), 1 & 11.

ROTC coursework was executed over the 1950s, calling for decreased participation from US authorities and furthering an academic approach to Military Science. A faculty report in 1959 reevaluating ROTC curricula called for the removal of basic military topics not categorized as pedagogical in college campuses, the acceptance of certain academic subjects as contributing to requirements in military training, and off-campus training during the summer.[128] There were also institutional problems with regards to the validity of ROTC courses, as they had no set credit value and could be rejected as electives in some colleges within the Río Piedras campus. Contrary to what pro-independence activist sectors claimed, however, ROTC enjoyed support among the student body itself, as enrollment continued increasing over the early to mid-1960s due to the attractiveness of the program's opportunities.

Even as ROTC training became voluntary, there appeared to be ample support for Military and Aerospace Studies programs across Río Piedras's university community and among military authorities off-campus. ROTC leader Colonel Rafael Montilla informed his superior that most of the student body was enthusiastic and receptive toward the program.[129] The administration also kept bolstering ROTC, with university leaders participating in military parades and communicating closely with military authorities both in Puerto Rico and the US metropole. In 1963, Associate Dean of Women Josefina Gorbea praised the *Madrinas* Corps as one of Río Piedras's thirteen female organizations. Gorbea argued that the *Madrinas* gave a feminine touch to ROTC and that their leadership and service turned them into important components in university life.[130] Associate Dean of Men Jaime Toro Calder was also proud of ROTC, claiming that cadets

[128] "A Reevaluation of ROTC Curricula" (August 18, 1959). Compilation 15: "ROTC", Box 8, AUUPR.
[129] "Letter from Colonel Rafael Montilla to Commanding General Antilles Command, US Army Caribbean, Fort Booke, PR" (). Compilation 15: "ROTC", Box 9, AUUPR.
[130] Josefina Gorbea, "Editorial," *Sound Off* (November 1963), 2. Box 11, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.

were "future leaders of men" because of their decision to meet challenges of modern society through discipline and dependability.[131] Dean of Students Pedro José Rivera penned an editorial for Army ROTC publication *Sound Off* in February 1964, four years after he led efforts for the program to become voluntary, asserting that ROTC was attractive because it offered an experience unmatched by any common university learning situation. Giving an academic justification for ROTC, Rivera cited Plato's conception of the state and his emphasis on the role of the military as a guardian of humankind.[132] The writings of Gorbea, Toro Calder, and Rivera went along the lines of Chancellor Jaime Benítez's unwavering support for ROTC as a vocational alternative and a source of income for the institution. The Chancellor's stronghold over university affairs, permitted by the 1942 University Law, meant that his commitment carried great weight. Meanwhile, as these powerful debates carried on, cadets expressed their own priorities and ways of thinking about ROTC in their student publications.

ROTC publication *Sound Off* and AF-ROTC publication *Contrails* illustrated the political perspectives and social interactions of cadets in the Río Piedras campus. Explaining the mission of the AF-ROTC, Cadet Colonel José A. Rodríguez argued that Puerto Rican cadets ought to create strong minds with the ability to cope with the realities of world change, preparing them to lead their Latin American neighbors by exerting a reflective and powerful influence.[133] In a 1960 issue, Cadet Captain Flores claimed that the United States "dismantled its military strength" after the second world war to prevent the expansion of nuclear warfare. Flores suggested that the US military did a poor job combating communism because it did not emphasize the protection of

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[131] Jaime Toro Calder, "Editorial: ROTC Program and College Education," *Sound Off* (December 1963), 2. Box 11, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[132] Pedro José Rivera, "Editorial," *Sound Off* (February 1964), 2. Box 11, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[133] Cadet Colonel José A. Rodríguez, "Mission of the AFROTC," *Contrails* (April-May 1961), 4. Box 9, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.

individual rights.[134] In 1961, brigade commander Cadet Colonel Salas of the Army ROTC contended that society was in an ideological war between communism and capitalism. Abiding by "Christian civilization", he encouraged his fellow US citizens to be in constant alertness and prompted advanced ROTC cadets to prepare for a "hot war".[135]

Along those lines, ROTC programs paid close attention to international developments. Published essays suggest support for military intervention in the Caribbean to protect neighboring countries from communist invasion.[136] Additionally, writings from cadets often showed dismissive attitudes toward Latin American countries, framing the area as easily influenced by communism and as potential rocket base sites in case of impending war.[137] In stark contrast to pro-independence student activists, cadets expressed ample disdain for the Cuban Revolution in their bulletins, framing the political change in the neighboring island as a communist threat to the United States and Puerto Rico.[138] This reaction to the Cuban Revolution went followed the discursive line of pro-ELA politicians, who sought to frame Puerto Rico as a benevolent capitalist society in contrast to Cuba's development model.

Still, those affiliated with ROTC included notions of *puertorriqueñidad* (Puerto Rican origins and belonging) as well as identification with US geopolitics in their conception of patriotism. Chancellor Benítez requested the playing of *La Borinqueña*, Puerto Rico's national anthem, in ROTC parades notwithstanding nebulous protocol about it not being a state nor an

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[134] Cadet Captain Flores, "Continuation of AUSA News," *Sound Off* (November 1960). Compilation 15: "ROTC", Box 9, AUUPR.
[135] Cadet Colonel Salas, "The Brigade Commander Speaks," *Sound Off* (November 1961), 2. Box 10, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[136] Juan A. García, "News Parade," *Contrails* (November-December 1960), 2. Box 9, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[137] Juan Antonio García, "Relations Between the US and Latin America," *Contrails* (November-December 1960), 6. Box 9, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[138] Antonio Rivera, " Crossroads," *Contrails* (September 1, 1960), 3-4. Compilation 15: "ROTC", Box 9, AUUPR.

international anthem.[139] In 1964, the student publication *Sound Off* offered guidance on how to fly the Puerto Rican flag properly, labeling it "the flag of our native land." Yet, the images used to explain such protocol incorporated the US-American flag, pointing it out as a symbol for its territorial counterpart.[140] The complex political perspectives of cadets, advocating for strong US military power while still embracing their Puerto Rican roots, were consistent with those of Puerto Rican soldiers during the first and second world wars.[141] ROTC student perspectives reflected the influence of the intensification of the Cold War in the archipelago, and an eager embrace of Puerto Rico playing a special role in a US-led Pan-American approach to world affairs.[142]

Writers in Military Science and Aerospace Studies' student publications also addressed the impact military training had in students' coming of age, drawing out a particular construction of masculinity. Commanding officers emphasized the value of maturity for effective civilian or military leadership, connecting it with honesty, wisdom, and selflessness.[143] Alert attention to world affairs was also critical in cadets' ambition to achieve social mobility.[144] According to Cadet Second Lieutenant Gonzalo González in 1964, cadets also needed to be characterized by their leadership skills, their faith in God, a desire to fight for what they believed, and the ability to stand by their decisions.[145] Cadets were expected to believe in a specifically Christian God and to show their conviction through sacrifice.[146] An *espirit de corps*, or pride in cadets' unit, demonstrated by

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[139] "ROTC, Bandera e Himno" (1960). Box 9, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[140] Arístides González, "Which Way," *Sound Off* (October 1964)1, 4 & 5. Box 12, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[141] Harry Franqui Rivera, *Soldiers of the Nation: Military Service and Modern Puerto Rico, 1868–1952* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018).
[142] An earlier instance of the strategic use of the University in Puerto Rico's approach to Pan-American politics is discussed by Carlos Rodríguez Fraticelli, "Colonial Politics and Education: The Pan-Americanization of the University of Puerto Rico, 1923-1929," *Historia y Sociedad*, no. 4 (1991), 138-164.
[143] "The PMS Speaks," Sound Off (October 1961), 2 & 6. Box 10, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[144] "Editor's Corner," *Contrails* (October 1964), 2. Box 12, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[145] Cadet Second Lieutenant Gonzalo González, "Editorial: What is a Leader?," *Sound Off* (March 1964), 2. Box 11, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[146] "Let's Think About Him," *Sound Off* (March 1963), 6. Box 11, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.

appearance, alertness, efficiency, teamwork and determination, seemed to be another expectation.[147] Cadets' patriarchal approach to masculinity fit the social construction of the "Great Puerto Rican Family," as male-led households were still considered ideal in ELA society.[148]

Women also joined ROTC and AF-ROTC in Río Piedras beginning in 1959. By participating in military exercises, they fostered and furthered a heteronormative notion of femininity among their peers. The *Madrinas* corps added women in uniform to ROTC parades and events. Writing for *Sound Off,* Antonio Angulo argued that the *Madrinas* corps were born out of a common necessity in the military establishment to boost morale, enhance the program's appearance, initiate social activity, and encourage the learning of military protocol.[149] Early in the 1960s, social sections of *Sound Off* and *Contrails* carried information about new *Madrinas*, giving details about their physical appearance, educational background, and goals.[150] Cadets voted for their favorite applicants. The beauty contest style framing matched *Madrinas'* representation throughout editions of *Sound-Off* and *Contrails*, in which cadets mostly described *Madrinas'* presence in the corps as a social accompaniment, rather than a working relationship.

Madrinas began writing their own opinion pieces regarding their place in ROTC during the 1960s. Sonnia Margarita Reyes argued that *Madrinas* needed to have moral standards, a pleasant seriousness, a real desire to belong to the corps, and good social grace with people, particularly cadets and officers.[151] *Madrinas* also met with prominent women and army wives, and

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[147] Cadet Sargent Francisco Rivera, "Espirit de Corps," *Sound Off* (September 1964), 2. Box 12, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[148] Findlay, Eileen Suárez, We Are Left Without a Father Here: Masculinity, Domesticity and Migration in Postwar Puerto Rico (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Hilda Llorens, Imaging he Great Puerto Rican Family: Framing Nation, Race, and Hender During the American Century (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).
[149] Antonio Angulo, "Our Madrinas," *Contrails* (January 1961), 4. Box 9, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[150] Antonio Angulo, "Social Rendezvous," *Contrails* (October 1960). Box 9, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR. Antonio Rivera & Héctor Sosa, "Social Rendezvous," *Contrails*, 3. Box 9, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[151] Sonnia Margarita Reyes, "Last Year Sponsors Honor Candidates," *Contrails*, 3 & 8. Box 11, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.

were encouraged to become military wives themselves in order to cultivate strong support systems for their husbands whenever they were deployed.[152] Still, *Madrinas* had an active presence in ROTC life, participating in military exercises and helping organize the social components of the program. And indeed, by the mid-1960s, *Madrinas* corps were wearing green uniforms, instead of their former white, entailing a performative parity with their male counterparts. As *Madrinas* became more integrated into ROTC life, they would become some of the program's most ardent supporters when opposition to mandatory military education turned into opposition to its presence on campus altogether.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, ROTC cadets commented on early conflicts in Vietnam in their publications, agreeing with what they understood to be a campaign to contain communism in Southeast Asia.[153] As events in Vietnam intensified, their reverberations on the Río Piedras campus would be not theoretical but material, conflictive and very consequential. The Vietnam War would drastically change dynamics regarding military education in the campus. Numbers of ROTC enrollees began dwindling in the mid-1960s as the looming threat of conscription became more tangible. At the same time, administrators kept debating the academic character of military education, progressively weakening its standing on campus. By 1964, the university decided that it would only accept basic ROTC courses as electives, rather than the entire curriculum. In 1965, ROTC courses stopped being counted for students' overall GPA.[154] As ROTC tried to have its courses count for the same number of credits across the university's colleges, discussions in the

[152] Honorary Cadet Captain G. López, "Mrs. Del Mar Visits ROTC Sponsors," *Sound Off* (November 1961), 3. Box 10, Compilation 15, "ROTC", AUUPR.
[153] "Vietnam Reappraisal," *Sound Off* (March 1965), 2. Box 12, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR; "Aggression from the North," Sound Off (May 1965), 2. Box 12, Compilation 15: "ROTC", AUUPR.
[154] "Desarrllo cronológico del ROTC como curso electivo en la Univerisdad de Puerto Rico," n.d. Complation 15: "ROTC", Box 9, AUUPR.

newly instituted Academic Senate would lead to the elimination by 1968 of an extra eight credits required for students who decided not to enroll in ROTC's first two years. This measure discouraged students from enlist in Military and Aerospace Science programs, since it meant that degrees for non-cadets became shorter. As activist faculty became part of administrative processes after the approval of the 1965 University Law, ROTC faced additional threats after decades of defense by administrators.

Understanding the broad campus support for ROTC programming in the early 1960s, and the ways military education influenced cadets is pivotal to apprehend the clashes that would occur in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Though pro-independence student activist opposition to ROTC had a long trajectory, the institutional approach to military education saw a swifter change. The Vietnam War transformed university students' mostly positive outlook on military structures. Meanwhile, as the war intensified so did anti-imperialist rhetoric from the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* off-campus. From 1964 to 1967, pro-independence student activists would go from combating their far-right counterparts to organizing mass campaigns against military education.

3.2 Cold War Ideological Ambiguity: The FUPI in the Early 1960s

Ten years after its 1956 founding, the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (FUPI), the largest pro-independence student collective in the Río Piedras campus, prided itself on what it claimed to be its impact in the Puerto Rican independence movement. In an interview with *El Mundo* newspaper, the organization's leadership suggested it contributed "combatants, inspiration, strength, direction and doctrine" to an emancipatory and revolutionary struggle for

independence.[155] Indeed, the FUPI's collaborations with pro-independence organizations off-campus grew closer in the early 1960s, as did the visibility of their opposition to both the university administration and the *Estado Libre Asociado* government. Former *fupistas* often cite the FUPI's predating of the MPI as evidence of youths' role in the early stages of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* to highlight the organization's autonomy from collectives off-campus. Still, the FUPI's self-preservationist approach as it situated itself as a political organization in Río Piedras shows pragmatism in its approach regarding student mobilization, centering student concerns on campus and refraining from confrontation in favor of independence.

A close examination of the FUPI's actions in the early-1960s depicts the nuances of supposedly innovative ideas and actions in the Puerto Rican independence movement, as the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* grappled with legacies of its Nationalist predecessors. This section argues that the FUPI's early actions were directly influenced by global Cold War tendencies, leading student activists to different approaches to the university's institutional issues and the struggle for Puerto Rican independence more broadly. The increasing impact of Cold War anticommunism in Puerto Rico guided the FUPI in embrace nationalist labels to avoid being labeled as communists whilst it situated itself within a historic trajectory of pro-independence struggle. This occurred as the FUPI increased its participation in international student organizing and emphasized solidarity with Third World struggles. The FUPI collaborated closely with the broader MPI during the early 1960s, supporting its boycott campaign for the 1964 election. This resulted in the development of journalistic discourses that framed the FUPI as the MPI's "student branch." As the University of Puerto Rico reached a new institutional phase with the approval of

[155] Joaquín O. Mercado, "FUPI celebrará un mítin en repudio de la nueva ley UPR," *El Mundo* (February 2, 1966), 4.

a new University Law in 1966, the FUPI would further connect its demands for institutional reform with its calls for a change in Puerto Rico's status. This section makes evident the enduring impact of nationalist ideologies in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* through an analysis of increasingly educated and radical university youths.

The FUPI was an active participant in the continuation and expansion of the "internationalization" of the struggle for Puerto Rican independence started by nationalist activists.[156] While the MPI took the plight of pro-independence Puerto Ricans to the United Nations, the FUPI took parallel steps via the International Union of Students. The FUPI used the Prague-based and partially Soviet-financed organization as a forum to discuss Puerto Rican decolonization, leaning on university students' increasing dissatisfaction with the Cold War world order.[157] FUPI representatives became part of the International Union of Students' secretariat soon after joining, and the organization regularly sent greetings and messages in support of the FUPI's actions and against Chancellor Jaime Benítez's administration, which still embraced the anti-political *Casa de Estudios* philosophy.[158] The FUPI's international presence in the International Union of Students increased *fupistas'* awareness of world affairs, as student activists began framing their plight as part of global struggles against imperialism.

The FUPI went so far as to claim that its militants would travel to any place that invited them, with the goal of calling attention Puerto Rico's colonial reality, embracing the exposure given by its trips as a strategy to further the independence cause.[159] The International Union of

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[156] Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico*, 187.
[157] Norman Pietri, "Estudiantiles," *Claridad* (July, 1961), 3.
[158] "Exiliados húngaros expresan apoyo a la FUPI," *Información Estudiantil* (October 1, 1962). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR." "Rector reitera grupo FUPI inició desórdenes, violencia," *El Mundo* (Novemebr 3, 1964), 1 & 31. "La FUPI en Praga," *El Mundo* (November 5, 1964), 6.
[159] "Sigue la difamación de *El Mundo* contra la FUPI," *Información Estudiantil* (August 23, 1964). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs", AUUPR.

Students sometimes financed its delegates' travels to countries in the Second and Third Worlds, and mainstream Puerto Rican media would eventually criticize the FUPI for engaging with socialist and communist leaders.[160] *El Mundo* newspaper covered FUPI delegates Narciso Rabell Martínez and Juan Ángel Silén's travels to the Soviet Union and China years after they occurred, associating international solidarity with support for communist infiltration in Puerto Rico.[161] Conservative commentators framed greetings exchanged with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and Chinese Chairman Mao Zedong as markers of anti-US-American sentiment and a supposed disdain for democracy. As it happened, Rabell Martínez's time in the International Student Union brought his pro-independence militancy to an end, as he married a Czechoslovak woman and drew away from the FUPI and the MPI. But the FUPI's connections to the growing international Left did establish significant ties in the Puerto Rican archipelago, even as student activists' and others' solidarity with anti-imperialist regimes led to the intensification of criticisms toward the *Nueva Lucha*.

The FUPI and the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s support for the Cuban Revolution and eager engagement with the Castro regime drew criticisms across the Puerto Rican political spectrum, intensifying after the failed Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) invasion in 1961. The defeat of militias trained in the United States in 1961 led to pro-ELA students organizing against the Castro regime, as they suggested that the Cuban leader was a traitor to a "true" revolution that was supposed to bring forth a democratic government to the island.[162] Pro-ELA and annexationist

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[160] Luis M. Escribano, "Discrepancia sobre visas impide salida grupo FUPI," *El Mundo* (October 9, 1961), 28.
[161] Narciso Rabell concurre a congresos Moscú, Praga," *El Mundo* (February 1, 1963), 24; "Cómo la FUPI ayuda a los rojos contra Puerto Rico," *El Mundo* (September 16, 1963), 1 & 16.
[162] E. Pizzi Galindo,"Alumnos de UPR montan piquetes en contra Fidel," *El Mundo* (April 25, 1961), 1 & 18; E. Pizzi Galidno, "Participantes piquetes UPR harán un desfile hoy," *El Mundo* (April 26, 1961), 2; Enrique Pizzi Galindo & Bienvenido Ortiz Otero, "Piquetes antirojos en UPR terminan con mítin, desfile," *El Mundo* (April 27, 1961), 1 & 10.

sectors' publications about Cuba implied that pro-independence Puerto Ricans supported state repression, claiming that they rejected democracy and Christian principles.[163] Puerto Rican newspapers began printing stories and opinion columns that used general information about travels to Cuba by *fupistas* and MPI leaders as the basis for conspiracy theories about Cuban meddling in the planning of Puerto Rican pro-independence actions.[164] Juana Castro, sibling to Cuban leader Fidel Castro, fueled rumors of that sort during a visit to the archipelago in 1966, when she connected Puerto Rican pro-independence activities with attendance to the Tricontinental Conference in Havana. Castro claimed that her brother declared war against free countries and encouraged Puerto Rico to push back against communism.[165] Though the FUPI grew steadily over the 1960s, anti-communist sentiment spread by the Puerto Rican press and government hurt its reputation with the public, despite the fact that the FUPI's postures would not align with Marxism-Leninism for years to come.

Meanwhile, the visible influence of Nationalist ideologies remained present in the FUPI's bulletins over the 1960s, showing the nuanced transition from Nationalist Party-led organizing toward the Left-aligned coalition-building *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. Nationalist platforms called for Puerto Rican control over government finances and business instead of seeking a change in the archipelago's economic system and its internal inequalities. FUPI journalism described the organization as continuing a long trajectory of pro-independence activism initiated by *próceres* in the nineteenth century and epitomized by the *Grito de* Lares, and continued

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[163] "Voz de alerta," *El Mundo* (April 27, 1961), 6. "Estudiantes curso básico UPR escriben a Stevenson," *El Mundo* (April 28, 1961), 2.
[164] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "La convención juventud MPI felicita a Lima," *El Mundo* (September 8, 1963), 1 & 18; Antonio Miranda, "Frente UPR estará en calma, policía retira vigilancia," *El Mundo* (September 12, 1963), 1 & 12; Pat Munroe, "Se registran entre policías y estudiantes," *El Mundo* (September 13, 1963), 1 & 29.
[165] Rafael López Rosas, "Dice acto Cuba incitó Motín UPR," *El Mundo* (February 14, 1966), 1 & 20.

by Nationalist organizing led by Pedro Albizu Campos, who was then still alive and revered.[166] The FUPI went insofar as to claim that it was not a "separatist" organization, renouncing the label used by their predecessors under Spanish rule. Along the lines of MPI leader Juan Mari Brás, the FUPI argued that while Puerto Rico had sought to "separate" itself from Spain, it had done so because it was a sea-borne province. The archipelago was not seeking to "separate" itself from the United States but rather to defeat its military invasion.[167] Strikingly, regardless of the ways the FUPI's interpretation of Puerto Rico's history and proposals for its future resembled that of its right-wing nationalist predecessors, ties to anti-imperialist and Third World organizations, and similarities to intensifying waves of youth protest led to rumors of communist allegiance.

While the FUPI drew increasing attention from off-campus commentators, annexationist student organizing also grew in the early-1960s. In 1963, Professor José María Lima caused controversy as he arrived late to teach in the fall semester due to then-illegal travel to Cuba. Pro-statehood students and politicians called for Lima to be dismissed even as Chancellor Benítez declined to intervene, claiming that Lima's personal political views did not hinder his performance as a professor.[168] What would become known as the *Caso Lima* (Lima Affair) was a turning point in right-wing organizing in Río Piedras, leading to the founding of the *Frente Anticomunista Universitario* (Anticommunist University Front/FAU).[169] Supportive of the annexationist Republican Statehood Party, the FAU argued that the university could not allow Left-leaning

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[166] "Hostos y Martí," *Información Estudiantil* (October 23, 1962). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[167] "La FUPI no es una organización separatista," *Información Estudiantil* (September 14, 1962). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[168] Martín Cruz Santos, "Jaime Benítez y el caso del profesor José María Lima en la vorágine universitaria del año 1963: La defensa de las libertades de pensamiento, expresión y cátedra," in Héctor Luis Acevedo, ed. *Don Jaime Benítez: Entre la Universidad y la política* (San Juan: Universidad Interamericana, 2008), 365-400.
[169] Carmen M. García, "Estudiantes repudian, apoyan al profesor José M. Lima," *El Mundo* (September 6, 1963), 1 & 35.

activity regardless of conventions of academic freedom.[170] While the *Caso Lima* was resolved after an institutional investigation found no fault in Lima's actions, the FAU's criticisms of the FUPI continued over the next few years. FUPI president Juan Ángel Silén sought to dismiss claims that FUPI was communist by claiming that most of its militants were Nationalist.[171] He was responding to Puerto Rican media's claims of a Nationalist-Communist conspiracy within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.[172] While opposite in the political spectrum, both archipelago Nationalism and global communism had trajectories of violence that could have threatened Puerto Rican democracy and its overall status quo. But in fact, the FUPI's actions over the early-1960s dabbled in university affairs and electoral politics.

As former *fupistas* transitioned to the MPI's leadership over the 1960s, the FUPI would come to voice its support for the first electoral boycott campaign in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s trajectory. The FUPI had long framed the ELA's electoral exercises as a farce that sought to mask the negative impact of US imperialism in Puerto Rico. As the Muñoz Marín government sought to calm the United Nations' calls for decolonization in 1962, the FUPI criticized its early efforts and claimed that the government further divided Puerto Rico's political spectrum.[173] The first outright boycott occurred during the 1964 electoral campaign, with the FUPI joining the MPI in organizing to dissuade archipelago Puerto Ricans from voting. Actions in the university itself reached their peak in late October, a week before the election. On October 28, 1964, FUPI militants interrupted a FAU meeting in the Barrio Amparo in Río Piedras, taking the

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[170] Antonio Miranda, "Frente UPR estará en calma, policía retira vigilancia," *El Mundo* (September 12, 1963), 1 & 12; "Frente Anticomunista reanuda piquete UPR," *El Mundo* (September 13, 1963), 1 & 18.
[171] "Juan SIlén admite hay comunistas en la FUPI," *El Mundo* (February 7, 1964), 1 & 18.
[172] "Serena vigilancia," *El Mundo* (March 11, 1964), 6.
[173] "En el mítin de la FUPI: repudio total al falso plebiscito," *Información Estudiantil* (September 14, 1962). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR. "Otra vez Mr. Ex,"; *Información Estudiantil* (1965). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

confrontation to campus before it became a riot.[174] FUPI activists notoriously burned a police car during the skirmish. The October 28 riot left nine wounded people and led Shock Forces, who were called to control the situation, to make six arrests.[175] The university administration and some Puerto Rican politicians, including Governor Muñoz Marín, condemned the FUPI for its use of violence on campus, claiming it was part of a conspiracy to limit the right to vote in Puerto Rico as a whole.[176] FUPI leaders, in turn, sought to de-emphasize the role of the election boycott dispute in this event, claiming that their actions had been in support of a new university law.[177]

October 28's events served both to assert the university administration's authority over student affairs and aided pro-ELA discourse in favor of the upcoming election. Chancellor Jaime Benítez canceled classes until after the November 4, 1964, election and began an investigation to identify those guilty of rioting in Río Piedras. Chancellor Benítez claimed that there were outside "professional agitators" involved and that he had the right to call police into campus due to it being an array of buildings spread around public lands.[178] Nationally, *El Mundo* newspaper was quick to connect October 28's events with the Nationalist-led 1948 strike on the Río Piedras campus and the big island-wide Nationalist Revolt that occurred in 1950. The paper claimed that *fupistas* sought to kidnap Chancellor Benítez and trigger a set of actions to prevent the election from happening.[179] University administrators and political figures echoed these claims, condemning the

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[174] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "2 alumnos de la UPR heridos durante mítin," *El Mundo* (October 28, 1964), 1 & 16.
[175] Carmen M. García, Eddie Figueroa, Rafael López Rosas & Antonio Miranda, "Queman auto, cuasan daños en institución," *El Mundo* (October 29, 1964), 1 & 64.
[176] Rafael López Rosas & Eddie Figeuroa, "El rector suspendió las clases," *El Mundo* (October 29, 1964), 1 & 48; "Habla el gobernador," *El Mundo* (October 29, 1964), 1.
[177] A. Quiñones Calderón, Eddie Figueroa & Carmen M. García, "Alegan actáun pro-reforma Univerisdad," *El Mundo* (October 30, 1964), 1 & 48.
[178] Antonio Miranda & Eddie Figueroa, "Gobernador da instrucciones Cnacio, Roig," *El Mundo* (October 30, 1964), 1 & 48.
[179] Antonio Miranda, "Revelan proósito secuestrar el Rector," *El Mundo* (October 30, 1964), 46. A; Quiñones Calderón, "Dicne motines ocultan plan paralizar UPR," *El Mundo* (October 31, 1964), 9; Antonio Miranda, "Estado alerta por actos UPR continuaría," *El Mundo* (November 2, 1964), 24.

FUPI's actions and encouraging the Puerto Rican population to vote to demonstrate that the archipelago valued democratic rights.[180] Though it is hard to determine whether or not the FUPI's actions on October 28 hurt the MPI's electoral boycott, quantitative evidence shows that the boycott campaign failed to reach its goals: turnout actually increased in the 1964 election as Puerto Ricans overwhelmingly elected Roberto Sánchez Vilella as governor. A Liberal reformist, Sánchez Vilella's administration would seek changes that sought to expand several public corporations, which included the University of Puerto Rico.

Governor Sánchez Vilella's administration prioritized the development of a new University Law, continuing processes initiated by his predecessor. These debates, which occurred within Puerto Rico's legislative chambers, had reduced student participation and were ongoing until a new law was eventually approved in 1966. Involving administrators, faculty, and students, discussions regarding a new University Law involved debates on the University of Puerto Rico's relationship to both the state that financed it and broader international panoramas of higher education. Most consequential, though, were discussions on the role students would play in the university community and institutional administration, which led to changes that impacted Río Piedras's activist panorama for decades to come.

[180] "Ve relación entre actos UPR, huelga electoral y reforma," *El Mundo* (October 30, 1964), 56.

3.3 Evaluating Student Rights: Developments in the 1966 University Law

Puerto Rico's Civil Rights Commission, a collective of lawyers who were formal members of Puerto Rico's bar and were active on social issues, released a series of studies regarding institutional policies and practices in the University of Puerto Rico over the 1950s and 1960s, recommending the democratization of university structures. These reports bolstered transformation efforts started by Governor Luis Muñoz Marín in the late-1950s out of his dissatisfaction with Chancellor Jaime Benítez's administration. Activist faculty and students claimed that the Civil Rights Commission validated their calls for a new University Law. Already privately supportive of university reform, Governor Muñoz Marín also used the Civil Rights Commission report to frame himself as a believer in *autonomía universitaria,* a perspective that rejected partisan intervention in university affairs.[181] The politically diverse Civil Rights Commission released reports that reflected the opinions of reformist professors and students who wished to increase their participation in administrative affairs.

The university community, however, held diverse views on how the new legislation was supposed to look and the degree of power the state ought to have over public higher education. Moreover, there were different perspectives on the potential impact that a new University Law could have on how the University of Puerto Rico functioned and the roles played by different groups within its community. Reformist sectors met significant backlash from more conservative *Casa de Estudios* supporters who were satisfied with Chancellor Benítez's administration and the

[181] Joaquín O. Mercado & Víctor M. Padilla, "Muñoz dice reconoce autonomía de la UPR," *El Mundo* (January 23, 1960), 1 & 12.

accomplishments of the university since the early-twentieth century. All these groups would seek to shape a legislative process that made national headlines during the early 1960s, shedding light on power structures within the university and giving occasion to spell out existing fears of political youth activism in a space of relative freedom of thinking.[182]

This section explores calls for a new University Law in the early-1960s, emphasizing debates on student rights and participation in institutional structures. It argues that scrutiny regarding student participation reflected a diversity of opinions regarding students' role in the university, molded by past experiences of student mobilization and a variety of perspectives regarding youths' capacity to participate in democratic processes. An analysis of student engagement with discussions about university reform also shows that student organizing went beyond the national/geopolitical, as a substantial sector of the student body was concerned with a new University Law strictly due to its institutional implications. Their concerns with university reform issues fit government agendas for the development and expansion of public higher education as a means for socioeconomic mobility for Puerto Rico's population. Non-partisan organizing in favor of university reform shows that Río Piedras's student body was not a uniform body defined by pro-independence, Liberal or Left-wing perspectives. Rather, students mirrored the ideological diversity of early 1960s Puerto Rico, which then embraced the Muñoz Marín-led Popular Democratic Party narrative in favor of the ELA as a permanent political system. At the same time, these internal institutional reforms did in fact have political consequences.

[182] Muñoz Marín held no official or public perspectives with regard to university reform but his writings show support for decentralized power structures in the University and increased emphasis on Puerto Rican issues within academics. Silvia E. Rabionet, *The Influence of the Puerto Rico Civil Rights Commission on the University of Puerto Rico Reform Movement, 1950s-1960s* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2002).

Additionally, reform processes occurring in the early-1960s configured the development of structures that subsequently allowed students to use institutional power to further political causes.

Debates regarding university reform questioned core notions of what the University of Puerto Rico was, how it functioned, the services it provided to archipelago society, and the function individuals should play in academic and administrative affairs. The integration of students and faculty in administrative affairs was seen as part of a Latin American approach to higher education, perceived negatively by annexationist and some pro-ELA sectors. Their dismissal of the Latin American university as a model for reform reflected their negative view regarding trajectories of student mobilization in the region and their reluctance to limit state power over university affairs in line with the notion of *autonomía universitaria*.[183] Meanwhile, annexationist sectors claimed that the University of Puerto Rico was a land-grant institution that ought to comply with US-American standards. The reality was more complicated, however, as only the one out of the university's then-four campuses used funds from the Morrill Act for its construction. Chancellor Benítez and other reformist sectors, however, argued that the University of Puerto Rico was neither US-American nor Latin American, but a Puerto Rican institution unique in character. This outlook suggested that the Puerto Rican university was as an indispensable structure in socioeconomic development, teaching culture to an electoral mass and providing public servants to newly instituted government structures.[184] Discussion of the nature of the university and the direction it

[183] Víctor Padilla, "Alega se escamotea la voluntad del pueblo," *El Mundo* (March 2, 1964), 1 & 20; Pedro de Acarón, "Trasfondo," *El Mundo* (March 15, 1965), 7. A; Quiñones Calderón, "Alega 'falsedad' de posición del rector," *El Mundo* (March 12, 1963), 21; "Política y educación," *El Mundo* (March 31, 1964), 6; Betsy López Abrams, "Cancio pospone comentarios sobre informe de motín UPR," *El Mundo* (March 16, 1965), 15.
[184] "Reunión histórica," *El Mundo* (August 13, 1960), 6; "Dice existe un clima de alineación y desconfianza en ámbito de Universidad de Puerto Rico," *El Mundo* (March 27, 1963), 5; Héctor J. Mejías, "Celebran un foro sobre la reforma," *El Mundo* (March 27, 1963), 1 & 17; "Destaca papel UPR en auge de PR," *El Mundo* (March 12, 1964), 20.

ought to take in the early to mid-1960s reflected an institutional transition from being a pillar of Americanization processes to a crucial component in the ELA's investment on youths.

Reformist sectors that believed in youths' capacity to participate in political processes demanded the reinstitution of a General Student Council via law. University authorities had left Río Piedras's General Student Council without a directive body as they disciplined its leaders in the aftermath of the 1948 strike. Administrators had declined to call for a new election, effectively dissolving the body that gave students a voice in administrative affairs. Reformist faculty and students sought the inclusion of the General Student Council as part of the University Law to secure its existence regardless of changes within the high tiers of the university administration, then designated by Puerto Rico's governor. They argued that university students were the best equipped to voice their own issues and had the capacity to organize and participate in democratic university structures alongside faculty and administrators. They argued that this new generation of students did not deserve to pay for the negative effects of the 1948 strike.[185]

Casa de Estudios supporters, in contrast, argued that the inclusion of a General Student Council in the new University Law would be government overreach, as the matter should be addressed by the university administration and regulated via the Student Rulebook. Moreover, Chancellor Benítez's allies argued that allowing students to organize and have a voice in institutional processes via law would fuel political activism disruptive to quotidian life on campus.[186] Thanks to the advocacy of reformist faculty and support of student participation in

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[185] Víctor M. Padilla & Héctor Mejías, "Recomienda 14 puntos para reforma UPR," *El Mundo* (July 17, 1963), 1 & 16; Víctor M. Padilla, "Representante claustro aboga por reforma UPR," *El Mundo* (July 24, 1963), 1 & 28; Lesbia Soravilla, "Sugiere crear Conejo de Estudiantes para afrontar amenaza comunista UPR," *El Mundo* (February 8, 1964), 7.

[186] "Tres ponentes favorecen política actual UPR; otros tres proponen importantes reformas," *El Mundo* (August 14, 1963), 1 & 18; Carmen M. García, "Dice la Ley Reforma haría de la UPR una institución de gestión política," *El Mundo* (February 15, 1964), 4; "Testimonio del Dr. Rafael Picó sobre el proyecto de reforma de la Ley

some sectors of the Puerto Rican Legislature, a General Student Council began appearing in proposed bills for the new University Law by 1963.[187]

On campus, multiple student organizations rallied in favor of the General Student Council and student participation in other student-centric processes over the early 1960s. They emphasized the development of a new Student Rulebook that would regulate acceptable behavior and discipline. The FUPI went so far as to propose a blueprint for a potential law, but it did not engage directly with legislative processes seeking to reorganize administrative structures. The FUPI had demanded university reform since its inception, strategically framing its institutional claims within other political demands and campaigns, like the electoral boycott of 1964.[188] The student collective Liberal University Vanguard claimed that the university censored actions intended to establish a General Student Council.[189] The arrival of a Cuban telegram in the aftermath of Vanguard's actions led to accusations of Left-leaning sympathies even though it was in fact disconnected from pro-independence activism.[190] There was also a Pro-Student Council Committee that organized students interested in more participation in university structures in a non-partisan way.[191] Students would assemble to discuss their main demands for a new University Law after the election of Governor Roberto Sánchez Vilella in 1964, as he put university reform high in his political platform.

Universitaria," *El Mundo* (April 14, 1964) 28; Víctor M. Padilla, "Insta se efectíue reforma de UPR de forma positiva," *El Mundo* (March 7, 1964), 36.

[187] "UPR tratará reglamento estudiantes," *El Mundo* (November 29, 1963), 1 & 47; Víctor M. Padilla, "Bill crearía sistema de educación superior," *El Mundo* (February 6, 1964), 1 & 12.

[188] Rabionet, *The Influence of the Puerto Rico Civil Rights Commission on the University of Puerto Rico Reform Movement*, 77.

[189] Pedro Hernández hijo, "Montan piquetes pidiendo Consejo Estudiantes UPR," *El Mundo* (September 22, 1962), 1 & 16.

[190] "Piden a Benítez facilite plan Consejo Estudiantes," *El Mundo* (September 27, 1962), 31.

[191] Homero Alfaro, "Se organizará en la UPR un consejo de estudiantes," *El Mundo* (March 13, 1960), 18; "Exhorta a universitarios a ayudar Consejo Estudiantes," *El Mundo* (August 16, 1960), 28; "Reunirán Comité Pro Consejo UPR," *El Mundo* (Novemebr 19, 1960), 33; "Dice palabras del Rector son escollo a gobierno," *El Mundo* (July 6, 1961), 31.

The issue of student rights broadly defined became the topic of the first official student assembly since 1948, which took place on March 1965. Dean of Students Pedro Javier Boscio authorized the meeting requested by student councils at the department level, which took place in the university theater and was student-regulated via parliamentary processes. Though the FUPI and the FAU participated in the exercise, assembly organizers legitimized the exercise by clarifying that the gathering was non-partisan.[192] Students primarily analyzed five points of discussion, with the first four achieving a rapid consensus. Students agreed to demand representation with voice and vote in administrative and academic university structures, participation in decisions related to student services, engaging in the drafting and approval of a new Student Rulebook, and to have a General Student Council elected via direct votes from students.[193] The fifth point dealt with rights considered constitutional off-campus: freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Some students argued that the guarantee of those liberties via the University Law would fuel political activism in Río Piedras, potentially disrupting academic activities. Heated exchanges within the forum led to calls for a student referendum to consider the fifth point. Two weeks later the actual vote took place and included an amendment recommending the prohibition of political organizing in the university. Strikingly, the "Yes" vote won on the amendment, representing a defeat for pro-independence political organizations that sought freedom to organize.[194] The March 1965 assembly exemplified the ideological diversity influencing student stances on the University Law on student participation in institutional affairs on the one hand, and broader political ones on the other.

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[192] Pedro de Acarón, "Trasfondo," *El Mundo* (March 15, 1965), 7.
[193] Ramón Rodríguez & Joaquín O. Mercado, "Asamblea 3,000 alumnos aprueba 4 recomendaciones," *El Mundo* (March 10, 1965), 1 & 30.
[194] Rafael López Rosas, "Aprueban en UPR enmienda que veda agitación política," *El Mundo* (March 29, 1965), 1 & 29; "Franco repudio," *El Mundo* (March 31, 1965), 24.

Students had no direct influence in the final version of the University Law, which was drafted by a Commission of Educators in late 1965. Governor Sánchez Vilella signed it on January 1966, leaving some sectors relieved and others unsatisfied. The law included a General Student Council and student membership in Academic Senates at the university and school levels, but without the power to vote. Reformist faculty and students rejected dimensions of the 1966 Law, especially the continued presence of Chancellor Jaime Benítez as leader of the university. The creation of a presidency of what became the University of Puerto Rico system in 1966 became one of the main points of tension between reformist sectors and supporters of the *Casa de Estudios*. Though less powerful than the previous chancellorship, faculty and students claimed that the role of president was assigned to Jaime Benítez before running an institutional search for the position. Activist sectors argued that the presidency would allow Benítez to maintain his control over administrative affairs and continue what they deemed to be a punitive approach to expression and political organizing on campus. The FUPI soon began claiming that true reform could not be realized without Puerto Rico achieving its independence, arguing that the university would continue serving colonial interests unless the archipelago cut ties with the United States. While isolated to *fupistas* and a few activist faculty members who were militants in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* off-campus, the framing of university reform as impossible without Puerto Rican independence influenced the FUPI's rhetoric over the reminder of the twentieth century. As the university prepared to draft a new Student Rulebook that could potentially permit political organizing on campus, several hundred students demonstrated their contempt toward a figure that showed ample disdain toward pro-independence collectives.

Tensions regarding the potential impact of the newly passed University Law came to their peak on February 4, 1966, when activist students and their sympathizers protested the presence on

campus of *El Mundo* newspaper sub-director Miguel A. Santín. Student Councils in the Colleges of the Humanities and Social Sciences had declared Santín a persona non-grata due to his negative coverage of university students as communist rebels. FUPI activists contended that Santín's columns were defamatory, and they organized a demonstration against a lecture he was supposed to give to Journalism students. Members of the *Asociación de Estudiantes Pro-Estadidad* (Pro-Statehood Student Association/AUPE) confronted the FUPI and the demonstration became a skirmish between pro-independence and annexationist students.[195] In a separate interview with me, former Associate Dean of Students Samuel Silva Gotay and former FUPI president Florencio Merced both described the events as a *revolú* or mess, framing them as a passionate demonstrations without much coordination or political meaning.[196] This struggle emboldened Santín, who continued connecting the FUPI with the MPI and accusing both of being manipulated by Moscow and Beijing. Moreover, the events that would become known as *Viernes Santín* led *El Mundo* newspaper to call for the FUPI's expulsion from the university regardless of the lack of protocol to do so.[197] Chancellor Benítez claimed that the new law would be used to discipline students involved in the confrontation.[198] The *Viernes Santín* and its aftermath showed the increasing polarization of activist students in the mid-1960s and gave fodder to external fears of student activism in Río Piedras.

While youths who grew up in the ELA's early years would be characterized as a "sober" generation by social scientists at the time, university reform processes made visible the tensions

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[195] Cacimar Cruz Crespo, "«Viernes Santín», entre la reforma universitaria y COINTELPRO," *80grados* (March 3, 2017), https://www.80grados.net/viernes-santin-entre-la-reforma-universitaria-y-cointelpro/.
[196] Samuel Silva Gotay, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018; Florencio Merced, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018.
[197] "Proscríbase la FUPI," *El Mundo* (February 7, 1966), 6; "Responsabilidad en su sitio," El Mundo (Feburary 11, 1966), 6.
[198] Joaquín O. Mercado, "Hacen pesquisa caso de Santín," *El Mundo* (February 7, 1966), 1 & 32; Joaquín O. Mercado, "FUPI hará piquetes a El Mundo mañana," *El Mundo* (February 8, 1966), 1 & 16.

that contesting political views brought to the development of educational structures. Pro-independence student activists – who remained few, but were increasingly visible in their activism, and in high-profile cases with opposing anti-communist and annexationist student groups on and around campus – grew more radical in their perspectives and actions as they interacted with the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* off-campus and felt the impact of Cold War anticommunism. Pro-independence student organizations would soon use the authorization of a General Student Council to their advantage, using spaces of student participation to further their institutional and political demands. The late-1960s and early-1970s would shift student organizing away from university reform, leading student activists to reinvigorate and expand its existing campaigns against military education.

3.4 Conclusion

In 1966, 23-year-old Sixto Alvelo became Puerto Rico's first judicial case of resisting the US-American draft for the Vietnam War. Various sectors of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* organized in support of Alvelo and other young men who actively rejected conscription, enhancing existing anti-war sentiment. A judge quickly absolved Alvelo of his criminal charges, giving impetus to the *Nueva Lucha* as it organized against the draft.[199] Committees in support for emerged all over Puerto Rico seeking to educate the communities around them about the events in Vietnam and advocating for actions that resisted US imperialism in the archipelago. *Nueva Lucha* sectors used MPI tabloid *Claridad* in the mid to late-1960s to describe the Northern Vietnamese

[199] Juan Mari Brás, "El caso de Sixto Alvelo," *Claridad* (August 27, 1966), 2.

government as an example of successful anti-imperialist struggle. Over the months that followed, on campus pro-independence student activists' solidarity with Vietnam manifested itself in the university, offering an internationalist and anti-imperialist frame to an ideologically diverse student body that was increasingly united in its opposition to mandatory military service.

Largely seen as a period of transition for the University of Puerto Rico's institutional policies and student organizing in Río Piedras, the early 1960s show the varied factors that led to the radicalization of pro-independence students and activist faculty. Dissatisfaction with university structures emboldened professors' calls for a new University Law. Debates on university reform exhibited how Puerto Rico's political spectrum extended polarization even as the ELA invested in the archipelago's economy and increased social mobility. Annexationism sprouted as an alternative to the ELA at the polls, while the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* took its claims abroad. Río Piedras's diverse student body lent itself for potential confrontations as the Vietnam War intensified and the service of Puerto Rican men became a necessity for US military campaigns abroad.

As we will see in the next chapter, the intensification of the Vietnam War and the draft that was instituted to defend US interests turned the Río Piedras campus into one of the main trenches against US imperialism in Puerto Rico. The approval of the 1966 Law coincided with the Sixto Alvelo case, and both exemplified and accelerated student activists' transition from university reform toward anti-war organizing. The FUPI would be able to expand anti-draft campaigns to escalate the opposition to military education that formed part of its early platform. Protest surrounding ROTC would come to define the five years following the approval of the new University Law, diversifying pro-independence organizations and their strategies. Yet, sociologist Arthur Liebman correctly noted that only a minority of the students took place in violence and

demonstrations: the majority of Puerto Rican university students, he insisted, remained sober "children of their parents" in political terms.[200] Along those lines, multifaceted anti-ROTC organizing would not only respond to the developments within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia.* Rather, the increasingly visible limits of pro-ELA reformism and the electoral success of annexationist sectors would be crucial in shaping activism in Río Piedras during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

[200] "Epilogue," in Liebman, *The Politics of Puerto Rican University Students*, 151-153.

4.0 Chapter 3 – Polarization and Generational Change: ROTC-Related Activism in the Río Piedras Campus, 1967-1970

Student activism in the University of Puerto Rico intensified in the late 1960s, a time of political polarization in the archipelago and across the world. This time, however, activist sectors demonstrated consensus regarding support for the *Estado Libre Asociado* (Associated Free State/ELA), the status that defines Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States. A 1967 plebiscite found that around 60% of Puerto Rico's voters supported the ELA; annexationism, or the desire to turn Puerto Rico into a US-American state, came in second place with 39% of the vote. The rise in pro-statehood votes pointed to clashes within Puerto Rico's pro-ELA and annexationist political elites and towards popular reflections on the ELA's merits.[201]

By the mid-1960s, the pro-ELA Popular Democratic Party's old guard grappled with a younger faction that wanted to tackle Puerto Rico's status question. They noticed that though the archipelago was relatively economically and socially stable, the ELA government failed to comply with the demand for jobs amid a growing population, forcing many to migrate in search of employment. Though initially acting as a mediator between the old guard and a new generation of the Popular Democratic Party, Roberto Sánchez Vilella, who was elected governor in 1964, became a leader of this group of "Liberals". Their approach was defined by a stricter separation of powers within Puerto Rico's republican government, which tended to function as a single unit in consultation with Luis Muñoz Marín, the archipelago's first elected governor. Further, younger

[201] In Pro-independence politicians and their sympathizers boycotted the plebiscite due to it being non-binding on Congress, getting under five thousand votes, for less than 1% of the total tally. César J. Ayala & Rafael Bernabe Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 224; Edgardo Meléndez, *Puerto Rico's Statehood Movement* (New York, Greenwood Press, 1988).

administrators dismissed previous norms and limited collaborations with more experienced leaders in the name of reform due to disagreements over what the ELA represented and how long Puerto Rico was supposed to remain under that status option. The new generation of "Liberal" members of the Popular Democratic Party called for more self-reliance on Puerto Rico's industries and resources for economic development, drawing away from the foreign capital investment promoted by Operation Bootstrap. Tensions between Sánchez Vilella and the Popular Democratic Party's establishment would result in its fracturing and eventual electoral defeat in 1968. This generational shift occurred across Puerto Rico's political spectrum, with youth offering new ways of rethinking the ELA and contesting it.[202]

Annexationism and the independence movement also underwent shifts in their respective leadership and their ideological profile. Dissatisfaction with Republican Statehood Party, the largest electoral alternative to the then-hegemonic Popular Democratic Party, also grew. Leaders like Luis A. Ferré and Carlos Romero Barceló broke with Puerto Rican Republicans and founded the New Progressive Party after disagreements over the 1967 plebiscite. Meanwhile, the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) felt the impact of a group of Left-wing pro-independence militants that called for a "New PIP" under the guidance of young law professor Rubén Berríos Martínez. The *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (MPI) continued its electoral boycott campaign as opposition to the Vietnam War attracted youths who shared its disdain for the draft, which was instituted in 1964 for all able-bodied young men. These political tensions would explode in the University of

[202] Biographies on the life and work of Governor Roberto Sánchez Vilella contain valuable information explaining the political dynamics that fueled this transition. Ligia T. Domenech Abreu, *¡Que el pueblo decida!: La gobernación de Roberto Sánchez Vilella* (Puerto Rico: EMS Editores, 2007); Celina Romany Siaca, *La verdadera historia de Roberto Sánchez Vilella* (San Juan: Fundación Roberto Sánchez Vilella, 2013). For broader histories of political transitions in the late-1960s see also Carlos Arroyo Muñoz, *Rebeldes al poder: Los grupos y la lucha ideológica* (1959-2000) (San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2002); Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón: *La política y lo político en Puerto Rico,* second edition (San Juan: Ediciones La Sierra, 2016); Edgardo Meléndez, *Partidos, política pública y status en Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Ediciones Nueva Aurora, 1998).

Puerto Rico's largest campus, where the generational clashes refashioning political activism off-campus would mold existing struggles against military education.

Though struggles against military education were part of pro-independence student activists' agenda since the late-1940s, the Vietnam War brought support from campaigns against the draft off-campus. According to historian Ché Paralitici, mandatory military service had a long trajectory in Puerto Rico, dating back to times of Spanish domain over the archipelago. While he admits that military drafts during the First and Second World Wars enjoyed broad support from Puerto Rican society, he focuses his work on opposition to mandatory military service, arguing that Nationalist struggles transformed the way that dissenters approached draft evasions.[203] Widespread opposition to the Vietnam War in the United States had repercussions in Puerto Rico, with struggles against its draft becoming a unifying force for the diverse collectives that made up the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* (New Struggle for Independence). Inspired by their Nationalist predecessors, they argued that Puerto Rican men should not serve in the US military due to the archipelago being a separate nation that was not involved in the conflict. Pro-independence organizing against drafting also included a component of solidarity with the people of Vietnam, seeing it as an inspiration of anti-imperialist Left-leaning struggle.

As in the United States, students played a fundamental role in struggles against the Vietnam War draft in Puerto Rico. According to Pedro Juan Rúa, the FUPI and the MPI began conversations with US-based Students for a Democratic Society, the Progressive Labor Party, and the Organization of Afro-American Unity in the early-1960s. Nevertheless, the impact of these solidarities paled in comparison to the influence of Sixto Alvelo's refusal to pledge allegiance to

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[203] Ché Paralitici, *No quiero mi cuerpo pa' tambor: El servicio militar obligatorio en Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 1998).

the United States and enlist in 1965, which catalyzed the expansion of anti-draft sentiment in middle and high schools in Puerto Rico.[204] In 1966, Alvelo faced criminal charges for evading the draft, leading to the creation of "Alvelo Committes" that united pro-independence Puerto Ricans in opposition to the draft. Opposition to the draft and the Vietnam War intensified existing conflicts against military education in the Río Piedras campus, with pro-independence students arguing that ROTC served as a tool of US empire on campus. Impetus for anti-draft activism led to increased support for anti-ROTC protest from off-campus organizations and its radicalization, turning clashes against mandatory coursework into campaigns for the removal of the program from the university grounds altogether.

The University of Puerto Rico felt the ripple effects of changes in major political party leadership and the growth and visibility of anti-war sentiment in the archipelago. After the approval of the 1966 University Law, Jaime Benítez's leadership over the Río Piedras campus ended as he transitioned to the presidency of what became a three-campus University of Puerto Rico system.[205] Lawyer Abrahán Díaz González became chancellor amid this transition and brought with him an administrative team with "Liberal" tendencies that adopted a more pragmatic and open-minded approach to dissent on campus.[206] They advocated for a revision of the University of Puerto Rico's Student Rulebook and supervised the institutionalization of Student

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[204] Pedro Juan Rúa, *Resistencia nacional y acción universitaria* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1988).
[205] For more on Jaime Benítez's work in the University of Puerto Rico and the Popular Democratic Party see Héctor Luis Acevedo, ed. *Jaime Benítez: Entre la Universidad y la política* (San Juan: Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, 2008).
[206] In his first speech for UPR faculty, Díaz González advocated for the development of a first class UPR by advocating for efficient intellectual communication between an excellent faculty and highly qualified students in an environment that facilitated the development of their upmost potential. This perspective gave students a more prominent role than Benítez's Casa de Estudios philosophy, which advocated for a university devoid of partisan politics. Abrahán Díaz González, *Universitad y sociedad* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2002). A more detailed explanation of the origins and implementation of policies inspired by it will be included in either the introduction or Chapter 1 of the dissertation.

Councils and the Academic Senate as forums for the expression of the university community. Chancellor Díaz González's reformist policies became the antithesis of Jaime Benítez's *Casa de Estudios*' strict hierarchical and apolitical model in the late-1960s, making pro-independence sectors of the university community more receptive to and collaborative with the post-1966 administration. The organization of anti-draft efforts off-campus intensified anti-ROTC sentiment in Río Piedras, leading to the development of new activist collectives and strategies.

The first staged action against military education in Río Piedras in March 1967 was the start of a four-year struggle that ended with ROTC training moving out of Río Piedras's main campus. I deem those four years the "ROTC protest period" and divide it in two phases. The first is the subject of this chapter. I consider that it lasted from 1967 through 1969, beginning with the FUPI escalating anti-ROTC struggle and ended with Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González's dismissal by Puerto Rico's Higher Education Council.[207] Events during this period included the interruption of ROTC demonstrations, the trial of *fupista* Edwin Feliciano Garafals for draft evasion, and two major actions after his guilty verdict: the *quema* or arson of the campus' ROTC building and a hunger strike against military education in Río Piedras. The second phase, to be covered in Chapter 4, lasted two years, beginning with pro-independence student organizations' regrouping early in 1970 and ending with the move of ROTC training off campus.[208]

This chapter argues that the first phase of anti-ROTC struggles in Río Piedras responded to wider transformations across Puerto Rico's political spectrum. While differing in their proposals

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[207] Gricel M. Surillo Luna, *La FUPI desde la otra esquina* (San Juan, 2006).
[208] The ROTC protest period is perhaps the most well-studied period in trajectories of student activism in the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Works on the relevant years for this chapter includes Ángel Agosto, *Lustro de gloria: Cinco años que estremecieron el siglo*, third edition (San Juan: Editorial Tiempo Nuevo, 2014); David Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta?: La lucha estudiantil en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Puerto, 1972).

for Puerto Rico's status, dissatisfaction among the ranks of major political parties and collectives in Puerto Rico permeated younger generations of Puerto Rico's growing middle class. Pro-independence student activists were aware of the global influences shaping their struggle, epitomized by what they considered an imperialist venture in Vietnam. Yet, student organizations seemed less aware of the ways that local electoral politics influenced their mobilizations. Mirroring a new generation of leaders in Puerto Rican party politics, university administrators from 1966 through 1969 brought a more flexible and tolerant approach to dissent without which student mobilizations would have likely been crushed earlier in the period. Anti-ROTC protest would end up triggering the end of the Popular Democratic Party's hegemony over the University of Puerto Rico's administrative affairs. This change in dynamics began a two-party debate that endures to this day, as pro-ELA and annexationist sectors hold clashing visions about the University of Puerto Rico, its relationship with the state, and the perceived threat of pro-independence student organizing in the institution.

This chapter is divided in four sections. The first section analyzes early anti-ROTC mobilization in Río Piedras in May 1967 and ends with the death of taxi driver Adrián Rodríguez. It argues that the FUPI's offensive stance against ROTC responded to anti-Vietnam War sentiment within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia,* setting forth global implications to a cause that had been strictly institutional in the past. The second section explores the Río Piedras campus' long-1968, which began in the aftermath of Rodríguez's death and lasted into the beginning of the 1969 fall semester. It maintains that Rodríguez's death and the prosecution of some *fupistas* (FUPI militants) on draft evasion charges affected the FUPI's offensive approach to ROTC struggle, leading it to center institutional issues. Meanwhile, the organization's efforts also rallied around the MPI's electoral boycott in the 1968 campaign.

Things did not remain calm for long, as explained in the third section, which explores the Fall 1969 semester. It uses three case studies, the FUPI's *quema* or arson of Río Piedras' ROTC building, the Pro-Independence University Youth's hunger strike, and the pro-ROTC *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás* (Parents' March) to argue that campus mobilizations during the 1969 Fall semester reflected diverse ideologies and strategies rather than a single anti-ROTC rhetoric. The final section covers the termination of Abrahán Díaz González as chancellor of the Río Piedras campus. It contends that the administrative changes both in Río Piedras and the wider Higher Education Council responded to changes in the Puerto Rican government's composition and annexationist approaches to higher education, which envisioned the university as a space of intellectual exchange along the *Casa de Estudios*' lines. These shifts not only responded to student protest but also to the New Progressive Party's platform of implementing economic policies that could potentially make Puerto Rico a desirable space for annexation to the United States. Overall, this chapter demonstrates the influence of broader shifts in Puerto Rican party politics in sculpting the diversity of student organizing in Río Piedras, debunking previous notions of its development being influenced solely by the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.

4.1 Escalating Struggle: 1967 Violence at the Río Piedras Campus

On January 1967, the MPI invited Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader Stokely Carmichael to Puerto Rico. Over a three-day visit, Carmichael criticized the Vietnam War's draft and visited Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos' grave. The visit to Albizu's grave epitomized both Nationalism's enduring influence in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* and Carmichael's logic regarding the relationship between struggles for black

power and for Puerto Rican independence, which he saw as a shared struggle against US imperialism. Carmichael argued that the United States exerted colonial rule over African Americans in their own land, and that Puerto Rico's ELA continued this trajectory by keeping Puerto Rico as a present-day colony within US borders.[209] Carmichael's visit exemplified the collaborations that pro-independence student organizations based in the Río Piedras campus had developed with liberation movements in the US mainland and with international student organizations.[210] His public condemnation of the US-imposed draft reflected the Vietnam War's impact in triggering youth mobilizations in Puerto Rico, where the University of Puerto Rico's Reform Law had just relaxed its approach to student dissent.

1967 saw the beginning of active anti-ROTC protest in Río Piedras. Pro-independence collectives like the FUPI, the *Federación Nacionalista de Estudiantes Puertorriqueños* (Federation of Puerto Rican Nationalist Students/FNEP) and a youth branch of the Puerto Rican Socialist League, had consistently opposed ROTC throughout their trajectories beginning in the 1940s and early 1960s, respectively. The US-imposed draft, however, provoked concrete actions against military education on campus. The Vietnam War served as an ideological backdrop to pro-independence student dissent, with the rhetoric framed as solidarity with the Vietnamese people. Exposed to the MPI's anti-imperialist narrative, *fupistas* became hostile against what they came to see as the institutionalized presence of US empire in their campus: military education in the form of a federally regulated ROTC program.

This section argues that the intensification of anti-ROTC activism in the Río Piedras campus responded to both the draft and the political turmoil off-campus. Puerto Rico's hegemonic

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[209] "Carmichael condena servicio militar," *Claridad* (January 29, 1967), 1 & 4.
[210] The FUPI collaborated with the Young Lords in the US mainland and with multinational associations like the International Student Union and the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students.

power structures fractured as both the Popular Democratic Party and the Republican Statehood Party underwent schisms because of generational clashes. Student conflicts against military training in Río Piedras were fueled by dissatisfaction with Puerto Rico's institutionalized political powers. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that the FUPI acknowledged that its focus on rejecting military education rose in a period when ROTC's popularity was already in decline. Still, ROTC's presence remained evident on campus, with public parades and exercises taking place in athletic facilities and the university using its own funding to promote military programs in the mid-1960s.[211] Political unrest and the visibility of ROTC's presence in Río Piedras combined to fuel student activists' desire to expel military education off campus.

As cited by oral history narrators, May 4, 1967, witnessed the first open anti-ROTC confrontation between *fupistas* and the University Guard.[212] May 4's special military exercises were part of Air Force Day and included a parade honoring San Juan Mayor Felisa Rincón de Gautier.[213] The FUPI planned to picket the day's events to reject ROTC's presence, citing the defense of freedom of expression and the right to protest on campus as additional causes.[214] In its interruption of the day's events, the FUPI would be denouncing both the Popular Democratic

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[211] During the 1950-1951 academic year, the Río Piedras campus had 4126 male students, 1683 (41%) of which were veterans. By the 1955-1956 academic year, the UPR-RP had 5374 male pupils, 2262 of them (42%) were veterans. Informes estadísticos sobre matrícula, Volumen II (1950-1958). Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, Office of the Registrar.

[212] According to Ayala and Bernabe, the May 1967 clashes occurred between *fupistas* and ROTC cadets. Inter-student clashes appeared to be limited to the FUPI and the AUPE according to available primary documentation. Ayala & Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 230.

[213] Popular Democratic Party member "Doña Fela" was the first woman to be elected mayor of a capital city in the Americas. Her administration turned San Juan into a Popular Democratic Party stronghold until her retirement before the 1968 election, eventually won by New Progressive Party leader Carlos Romero Barceló. See Vicki Ruiz & Virginia Sánchez Koroll, eds. *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 624-625.

[214] "Piquete contra el ROTC- jueves 4 de mayo – piquete contra el ROTC," *Información Estudiantil*, (May 3, 1967), Compilation 14, AUUPR. This protest occurred amid debates regarding students' political expression during the revision of the Student Rulebook. Chancellor Díaz González's "Liberal" administration supported the institutionalization of student rights while sectors who aligned with President Benítez felt freedom of expression ought be measured on a case-to-case basis.

Party, represented by Mayor Rincón de Gautier, and US imperialism, symbolized by ROTC. Pro-statehood group *Asociación Universitaria Pro-Estadidad* (University Pro-Statehood Association/AUPE) planned counter-protests after learning that the FUPI planned disturbances to the events. *Fupistas* clashed with AUPE members in front of the University Theater before reaching the event's venue, where a group of pro-independence student activists interrupted military exercises by lying down in Río Piedras's athletic track and the nearby stage. This was not a sit-in however, as protesters threw dirt at cadets and called invited military officers "criminals" and "imperialists" while chanting anti-war slogans.[215] Pro-independence newspaper *Claridad* claimed that over three thousand students participated in the parade's interruption, showing the breadth of opposition to military exercises on campus.[216]

The Río Piedras campus administration's response to May 4 highlighted its distinct approach to dissent, overlooking the political affiliation of activists who underwent institutional disciplinary processes. Chancellor Díaz González insisted that Río Piedras students ought not to be treated as children but warranted a respectful relationship free of authoritative paternalism.[217] Both *fupistas* and members of the AUPE ended up being punished, as the administration determined that both sides had behaved in an "embarrassing and regrettable" way.[218] *Fupistas* argued in the pro-independence newspaper *Claridad* months later that student suspensions in response to May's events had not affected the FUPI's struggles, stating that the organization's prestige would make sympathizers line up to fill its ranks.[219] Just as Sánchez Vilella was failing to

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[215] Judith Pagani & Rafael López Rosas, "Cuatro heridos; se suspende parade ROTC," *El Mundo* (May 5, 1967), 1 & 40.
[216] Juan Mari Brás, "La lucha en la Universidad," *Claridad* (May 14, 1967), 4.
[217] Abrahán Díaz González, *Universidad y sociedad* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2002), 28.
[218] Judith Pagani & Rafael López Rosas, "Rector UPR inicia pesquisa," *El Mundo* (May 5, 1967), 1 & 16.
[219] Rafael Alicea, "Suspensiones no afectan nuestra lucha, dice FUPI," *Claridad* (August 13, 1967), 1 & 4.

bridge the gap between the Popular Democratic Party's old guard and its reformers, the Río Piedras administration's response to May 4 failed to moderate the FUPI's struggle against military education.[220]

A month after May 4, Stokely Carmichael wrote to Chancellor Díaz González denouncing student expulsions resulting from the day's events, attributing them to the administration's animosity towards the FUPI and embarrassment regarding the day's events. He argued in the name of the SNCC that foreign forces manipulated the university leaders: namely the US government and its white power apparatus.[221] This letter was published in the pro-independence newspaper *Claridad*, exemplifying the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s dissatisfaction with Chancellor Díaz González's liberal university administration and closer ties with Black power movements in the US metropole. Carmichael's claim regarding US influences would be similar to the mainstream press's, which argued that the *Nueva Lucha* and Left politics dominated the University of Puerto Rico's administration. Both Carmichael and the press placed the burden of the consequences of May 4's events on outsiders, when in reality the administration made consistent efforts to maintain *autonomía universitaria* and handle student discipline internally.

AUPE activists affected by Chancellor Díaz González's investigation did not hold back their criticisms of Río Piedras's administration, publicly accusing it of aligning with the Puerto Rican independence movement. In an interview with *El Mundo* newspaper, AUPE president Orestes Ramos accused Dean of Students Samuel Polanco of having pro-independence leanings

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[220] According to historian Ligia Domenech, opposition between "conservative" and "reforming" sectors of the Popular Democratic Party which differed in their approaches to Puerto Rico's economic development. Conservative sectors believed that the archipelago was unable to develop its own industry, advocating for reliance on foreign investment. Sánchez Vilella and his supporters wanted an independent economy that could eventually lead Puerto Rico to political sovereignty. Ligia T. Domenech Abreu, *¡Que el pueblo decida! La gobernación de Roberto Sánchez Vilella* (San Juan: EMS Editores, 2007).
[221] "Líder negro condena suspensiones en UPR," *Claridad* (June 25, 1967), 6.

and favoring the FUPI. The MPI's anti-imperialist platform and its collaboration and solidarity with Third World struggles meant that somebody accused of favoring the archipelago's independence could easily be framed as aligning with communism.[222] Puerto Rico's mainstream press shared this perspective, playing a key role in the perpetuation of Cold War anti-communism in the archipelago. For instance, *El Mundo* newspaper published multiple editorials and columns that stated that the FUPI was well organized, disciplined, and strategic. In the paper's perspective, the FUPI could easily succeed in infiltrating communist propaganda to the Río Piedras community.[223] Columnist Miguel Santín, who pro-independence student organizations had protested a year earlier, claimed that the University of Puerto Rico was a "bastion of Ho Chi Minh, Kosygin, Mao and Fidel Castro." [224]

Chancellor Díaz González's approach to May 4 was controversial among annexationist and old guard pro-ELA sectors, but the Higher Education Council approved of his actions and did not censor his suspension of pro-statehood activists.[225] Reflecting the administrative de-centralization brought forth by the 1966 University Law, the Popular Democratic Party-leaning body granted relative autonomy to the Río Piedras campus if its leaders did not violate established bylaws. Díaz González's tolerance of pro-independence student dissent would become his Achilles heel as anti-ROTC protest intensified, resulting in his being represented as a weak leader who permitted violent unrest on campus.

The perspectives that shaped May 4's confrontations between *fupistas* and AUPE activists signaled changes in the political movements they aligned with. The FUPI's rhetoric shared anti-

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[222] "Líder AUPE protesta de prejuicio," *El Mundo* (May 8, 1967), 2.
[223] Editorial, "Es la mismísima FUPI," *El Mundo* (May 8, 1967), 6.
[224] Miguel A. Santín, "Trasfondo," *El Mundo* (May 6, 1967), 7.
[225] Judith Pagani, "Condena Actos de Agresión," *El Mundo* (May 13, 1967), 1 & 18.

imperialist arguments with the MPI, with both organizations joining other collectives within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* to reject the Vietnam War. While former Nationalist activist Juan Mari Brás remained the MPI's leader, the influence of former *fupistas* in the organization's leadership led to its growth and the adoption of an increasingly Leftist rhetoric. The FUPI participated in an electoral boycott campaign against the 1967 plebiscite, which gradually led to the perception that the FUPI was a branch of the MPI, rather than an independent ally. Meanwhile, the AUPE's perspectives reflected those of the leaders of *Estadistas Unidos* (United Statehooders), an organization that preceded the New Progressive Party embracing free-market industrial capitalism as a platform for Puerto Rico's development. Serving as an alternative to the Republican Statehood Party, which like the MPI boycotted the 1967 plebiscite, *Estadistas Unidos* rallied Puerto Ricans to vote to demonstrate that Puerto Rico demanded statehood.[226] Calls for electoral participation persuaded AUPE student activists, who would end up transitioning to become active members of the New Progressive Party rather than the Republican Statehood Party, despite the latter's trajectory of supporting annexationist student actions.[227] Annexationist criticisms against Chancellor Díaz González's administration and pro-independence organizations in the Río Piedras campus reflected anti-Left sentiment more than a genuine fear against the electoral power of independence sectors.

While FUPI and AUPE activists suffered consequences after May 4, administrative disciplinary proceedings did not control student violence in Río Piedras. On September 27, 1967, police intervened in a riot between the FUPI and the AUPE. Pro-independence activists confronted AUPE militants for publishing a pamphlet that accused pro-independence students of being drug

[226] Meléndez, *El movimiento anexionista en Puerto Rico*, 126.
[227] David Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta?*, 24.

addicts, drug traffickers, and of poisoning Puerto Rican youth by "serving as communist agents from Havana, Moscow and Beijing."[228] Confrontations between *fupistas* and AUPE sympathizers reached their peak in September of 1967, as up to two thousand FUPI sympathizers marched to Río Piedras's police station protesting their peers' arrests due to May 4's events. Police later chased student protesters back to campus while shooting.[229] Police inadvertently shot Adrián Rodríguez, a Puerto Rican Independence Party-sympathizing taxi driver who was observing the day's violence from the steps of the university museum.[230]

In the immediate aftermath of Adrián Rodríguez's death, both old guard pro-ELA and annexationist sectors expressed their opposition to riots in the Río Piedras campus.[231] Puerto Rico's Department of Justice began a criminal investigation on the events leading up to Rodríguez's death, which prompted the arrest of 25 students on riot charges.[232] Puerto Rico's Civil Rights Commission also began its own non-governmental inquiry on the taxi driver's untimely demise, as did public discussions on the Puerto Rican Police's right to enter university facilities.[233] Rodríguez's autopsy later determined that he was a drug-addict.[234] His alleged drug use served to

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[228] Ibid, 25.
[229] Judith Pagani, "Inician pesquisa de sucesos en UPR," *El Mundo* (September 29, 1969) 40.
[230] Bienvenido Ortiz Otero, "Uno muere, 21 policías heridos en motines UPR," *El Mundo* (September 29, 1967), 1 & 14; Judith Pagani, "Insta Comisión de Derechos Civiles investigue acción de la policía," *El Mundo* (September 30, 1967), 1 & 16.
[231] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Negrón López señala 'fracaso' en la UPR,' *El Mundo* (September 29, 1967), 1; Antonio Miranda, "AUPE exige al rector expulsión de fupistas de UPR," *El Mundo* (September 29, 1967), 2; Víctor M. Padilla, "Culpa al gobierno por desórdenes UPR," *El Mundo* (Setpember 29, 1967), 14; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Discuten problemas internos," *El Mundo* (October 6, 1967), 1 & 14.
[232] "Inician pesquisa de sucesos en UPR," *El Mundo* (September 29, 1967), 40; "Formulan cargos por motines UPR," *El Mundo* (October 20, 1967), 35.
[233] Judith Pagani, "Insta Comisión Derechos Civiles investigue acción de la policía," *El Mundo* (September 30, 1967), 1 & 16; Judith Pagani, "Comisión Derechos Civiles investigará motines UPR," *El Mundo* (October 5, 1967), 1 & 18.
[234] Bienvenido Ortiz Otero, "Autopsia determine chofer era drogadicto," *El Mundo* (November 2, 1967), 1 & 24.

demean the death of an already undesirable *independentista* from the projects.[235] Adrián Rodríguez's death cooled off the FUPI's offensive against ROTC by late-1967, as the trial against accused students extended into 1969. MPI leader Juan Mari Brás personally undertook the defense of accused students, with 21 out of 25 having to appeal guilty verdicts after the investigation determined that a police bullet did not kill Rodríguez.[236] Pro-independence student organizations grew and diversified over the late-1960s due to their opposition to military education and the Vietnam War more broadly. Meanwhile, annexationist students joined off-campus efforts to legitimize and elect the New Progressive Party, drawing them away from campus activism and their opposition to the FUPI.

Widespread anti-militarist rhetoric would continue radicalizing the student body after 1967, leading to the founding of new student organizations aligning with different sectors of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia.* Students who opposed the Vietnam War, the draft and/or military education would come together with the common goal to remove ROTC from the Rio Piedras campus. These collectives differed both strategically and ideologically with regards to how Puerto Rican independence ought to look, and how it would be achieved. The year 1968, often skipped in narratives regarding student activism in Río Piedras, would foreground this diversification and lay the groundwork for additional mobilizations related to ROTC.

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[235] According to Zaire Dinzey Flores, Puerto Rican projects became spaces of segregation for low-income Puerto Ricans, rather than being transitional spaces to middle class homeownership. Managed by government-business alliances, projects in the archipelago hinder their inhabitants' opportunities for socioeconomic mobility. Zaire Dinzey Flores, *Locked In, Locked Out: Gated Communities in a Puerto Rican City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[236] Manuel Maldonado Denis, *Puerto Rico: Una interpretación histórico-social* (Mexico: Siglo Ventiuno Editores, 1980).

4.2 The Río Piedras Campus' Long 1968

This dissertation relied on oral history to get on the ground information on events happening in Río Piedras over the mid-twentieth century. In interviews conducted during 2018, narrators often overlooked 1968 when interviewed about their experiences with anti-ROTC protest in the Río Piedras campus. Indeed, the events that occurred in 1968 appear to pale in comparison to the May 4, 1967 *revolú* (mess) and the escalation of anti-ROTC protest in Fall 1969. However, the University of Puerto Rico was hardly peaceful or irrelevant to Puerto Rico's wider social mobilizations in 1968. Indeed, Puerto Rican students joined a wave of global protest, starring French youths staging actions in what became known as the May 68 and Mexican student actions that resulted in a massacre in October of that year.

I suggest that we should think of the Río Piedras campus as experiencing a long 1968, beginning with the aftermath of Adrián Rodríguez's death and ending with the escalation of anti-ROTC protest in September 1969. Pro-independence student activists spent 1968 not only dealing with the aftermath of Rodríguez's death but as active participants in Puerto Rico's political debates. The archipelago underwent significant transformations in that year, including the ultimate fracturing of the Popular Democratic Party between the old guard and the newly formed People's Party. Additionally, there were internal debates within the Puerto Rican independence movement, and the rise of a new pro-statehood force, the New Progressive Party, which would remain the dominant channel for annexationist politics up until the present.

Pro-independence Puerto Ricans also commemorated the 100th anniversary of the *Grito de Lares*, Puerto Rico's only pro-independence uprising against the Spanish empire, in 1968, resulting in reflections among sectors of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia.* While pro-independence student organizations seemed to abandon anti-ROTC protest while dealing with the aftermath of

Adrián Rodríguez's death, opposition to military education remained present in their rhetoric. 1968 would also see early iterations of student-worker solidarity in Río Piedras, which would become the major student platform over the mid-1970s. Indeed, far from being an empty pause, the Río Piedras campus's 1968 is key to understanding the intensified polarization of its student body and Puerto Rico's wider society which drove ROTC-related protest later in the 1960s and 1970s.

The University of Puerto Rico also experienced attacks from a clandestine organization within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, events that helped reignite debates over the role of violent actions in the pursuit of national liberation for the archipelago. The *Comandos Armados de Liberación* (Armed Liberation Commandos/CAL) took an aggressive approach to Puerto Rican independence drawing from a Nationalist past, opposing US-American business ventures in the archipelago. According to Lucila Irizarry Cruz, the CAL were a "shield" of social, labor, and student movements that experienced state repression. Communicating its actions in pro-independence newspaper *Claridad*, the CAL acquired a sense of impunity that would escalate until their dissolution in the early-1970s.[237] The University gave the CAL a space to make their commitment to Puerto Rican independence visible, and their actions in Río Piedras intensified the representation of pro-independence student activism as inherently violent.

Adrián Rodríguez's death dealt a blow to the FUPI's anti-ROTC efforts. Puerto Rico's Department of Justice admitted that it had not found evidence regarding who killed the taxi driver, alleging that it did not have enough time to thoroughly investigate the issue.[238] Yet in April 1968, seven months after September 27's events, the Puerto Rican government charged twenty-five student activists with rioting, conspiracy, attempted malicious arson in first and second degree,

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[237] Lucila Irizarry Cruz, *CAL: Una historia clandestina (1968-1972)* (San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2010)
[238] "Sin resolver muerte taxista," *El Mundo* (February 29, 1968), 16.

and malicious damages.[239] Not all who were charged were *fupistas* or even aligned with the MPI. Most, however, had been accused of draft resistance.[240] The FUPI labeled the case a "political trial", claiming that the judicial process intended to incarcerate the leadership of pro-independence organizations that the colonial government deemed dangerous.[241] While the FUPI's 1968 bulletins acknowledged that these judicial processes hurt their struggles, the organization would later use allegiants' criminalization strategically, arguing to its Río Piedras campus readers that facing trial was a necessary sacrifice for some of its militants. This discourse would become an important component of pro-independence student activists' actions as they became more involved in off-campus actions before leaving university during the mid-1970s, sometimes leading to long-term suspensions or the abandonment of their degrees altogether.

The FUPI began the 1968 Fall semester fighting for an institutional cause that showed its early connections with labor organizing. The Student Center's cafeteria, run by a company called Slater, announced increases in its food and coffee prices over the summer. The FUPI deemed the price hike excessive, arguing that it would aggravate the student body's economic hardships. Consequently, the FUPI organized the non-violent *Operación Bandeja* (Operation Tray), where protesters would choose food and then leave their trays close to the cash registers, complaining about the price. Pro-independence student activists also organized sit-ins close to the cafeteria's entrances and its registers to keep patrons who were not participating in *Operación Bandeja* from paying.[242] The protests worked relatively quickly, with Slater returning prices to their pre-Summer levels within a week. While the university administration suspended some protesters, Associate

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[239] Bienvenido Ortiz Otero, "Incluyen líderes alumnos," *El Mundo,* express edition (April 26, 1968), 1 & 16.
[240] Wilda Rodríguez, "Liberan bajo fianza dieciocho separatistas," *El Mundo* (April 30, 1968), 4.
[241] "Un juicio politico," *Información Estudiantil*, (November 27, 1968). Compiliation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[242] "FUPI dirige protesta cafetería UPR," *El Mundo* (August 21, 1968), 5.

Dean of Students Samuel Silva Gotay created a student committee to reevaluate food prices at the cafeteria, emphasizing student perceptions over institutional ones. While *Claridad* attributed the success of *Operación Bandeja* to the FUPI's organizing, the broader Puerto Rican media deemed problems in the cafeteria as disconnected from pro-independence causes, representing the FUPI as a chaotic organization that only wished to cause unrest.[243] Yet *Operación Bandeja* showed pro-independence student activists' awareness of student issues beyond their organizations' advocacy of Puerto Rican independence. It also shed light on their awareness of the limits of the University as an activist space, as they used a strictly institutional problem to build a critique against economic inequality exacerbated by US colonialism.

While students succeeded in avoiding price hikes in the cafeteria, Slater then argued that keeping prices the same would result in financial losses. Consequently, in September the company threatened to fire some of its employees. Cafeteria workers stopped operations for a couple of hours before Slater reinstated two employees supposedly fired both to cut costs and as retaliation for aiding student protesters.[244] The FUPI wrote in solidarity with Slater's workers, arguing that cafeteria employees had been supportive of *Operación Bandeja*. This fit into the FUPI and the MPI's developing ideology of workers as a vanguard of social and political struggle in Puerto Rico. *Operación Bandeja* shed light on the FUPI's multiple strategies for struggle, resorting non-violence even amid a period of escalation of struggles against military education. In addition, the aftermath of *Operación Bandeja* would become an important precedent for the FUPI's struggles

[243] "Estudiantes triunfan en UPR," *Claridad* (September 1, 1968), 3. "Hay que castigarlos," *El Mundo* (August 29, 1968), 6.
[244] Judith Pagani, "Huelga cafeteria de la UPR," *El Mundo* (September 13, 1968), 5. The employees of the Río Piedras campus' cafeteria would soon join Puerto Rico's Gastronomic Union, which supported subsequent mobilizations demanding improved wages and working conditions.

after ROTC's removal from campus in the early-1970s, when they emphasized student-worker solidarity in Río Piedras and beyond.

1968 also saw a renewed emphasis on the *Grito de Lares*' meaning for Puerto Rico's independence movement and Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations more specifically. This echoed developments among radical activists off campus. Pro-independence activist priest Antulio Parrilla called for a pro-independence gathering in Lares on September 23, 1968, commemorating the *Grito*'s one hundredth anniversary.[245] This greatly motivated the FUPI, which published bulletins announcing the event that, while endorsed by the MPI, was not supported by the Puerto Rican Independence Party.[246] The FUPI, which at that point looked down on electoral politics, criticized the Puerto Rican Independence Party for failing to support the festivities, claiming that it only participated after its membership announced they would attend regardless. The university administration opposed student attendance to Lares in 1968, and later claimed few students had gone.[247] Chancellor Díaz González drew on Nationalist arguments about the greatness of Puerto Rico's past and argued that Río Piedras' students ought have honored their history by performing their everyday tasks rather than participating in political activities.[248] Student participation in yearly *Grito de Lares'* remembrance would become consistent over the following two decades, showing fractures within both pro-independence organizations in Río Piedras and the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* more broadly.

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[245] Monsignor Antulio Parrilla had been active in anti-war activissm. He later published "La objeción por conciencia a la guerra" on 1969, making a case against the Vietnam War using Augustinian just war arguments. Miguel Santiago Santana, *Antulio Parrilla Bonilla: Obispo y profeta de Puerto Rico* (Bayamón: Fundación El Piloto, 2013).
[246] United Press International, "Juventud PIP en UPR," *El Mundo* (September 16 1968), 8.
[247] United Press International, "Acto Lares no afecta actividades en UPR," *El Mundo* (September 24, 1968), 3.
[248] Judith Pagani, "Estudiantes UPR exigen lunes sea día libre," *El Mundo* (September 21, 1968), 4.

Tensions within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* were becoming increasingly fraught as some groups associated with it began showing their support for armed struggle of various kinds. Consequently, US federal and local Puerto Rican authorities brought the weight of repressive policing to bear against anyone thought to be supportive of any part of it. As some students left Río Piedras for Lares on September 23, 1968, University authorities found a bomb outside the ROTC building with a sign announcing the *Grito de Lares* centenary and the initials of the *Comandos Armados de Liberación* (CAL).[249] The CAL had already placed bombs in several shops owned by US-Americans or affiliated to US companies which did not explode. Even before the bombs' placement on campus, from September 1968 onward newspapers like *El Mundo* mentioned the CAL's activities when covering student activism in the Río Piedras campus, essentially framing student protest as being as dangerous as clandestine violence to Puerto Rican society at large.

Debates regarding armed struggle in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* affected student organizing in Río Piedras. While the CAL was not officially part of the MPI, MPI leaders never condemned the CAL's clandestine actions, with some observers arguing that the MPI supported its bomb-settings financially. According to MPI leader Juan Mari Brás, the CAL represented a "serious endeavor of a group of compatriots to further the struggle for independence."[250] Support for the CAL in the MPI showed its Nationalist influences, as it stood by an organization that targeted US-American businesses regardless of it not being openly Leftist

[249] Antonio Santiago, "Hallan bomba edificio ROTC," *El Mundo* (September 23, 1968, 1 & 19.
[250] "CAL publica manifiesto," *Información Estudiantil* (1968). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

or supportive of the Cuban Revolution, traits connected with the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.[251]

The MPI's refusal to outright reject clandestine actions caused a schism within the organization, resulting in the departure of figures like founding FUPI member and then lawyer Norman Pietri.[252] The FUPI's attitude regarding armed struggle is difficult to pin down, as it was ideologically supportive of clandestine mobilization. Still, the organization sought to curb dissent within its ranks, particularly of those who did not align strictly with the MPI's vague stance on violent action. The FUPI had been condemning factionalism within its ranks since early in 1968, accusing dissenters of being too concerned with "legality."[253] In a 1968 edition of *Información Estudiantil*, the FUPI claimed that "The Puerto Rican people, like the rest of the world's peoples, would fully understand the necessity of a multi-organization radical struggle that would fight its enemy in diverse spheres as imperialism's contradictions aggravated."[254] As outlined in Chapter 4, the second phase of the ROTC protest period would involve armed anti-ROTC students rioting in Río Piedras, accelerating the escalation of struggles against military education.

While clandestine mobilizations concerned Puerto Ricans, the archipelago's electoral scene experienced transformations of its own. The Popular Democratic Party fractured after years of internal clashes, choosing to nominate Senator Luis Negrón López over Governor Roberto Sánchez Vilella, who went on to found the People's Party. Noticing the weakness of the Popular Democratic Party, Luis A. Ferré created the New Progressive Party, a new annexationist party that

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[251] For more information about the CALs, see Ángel Agosto, Lustro de gloria, 71-76, 235-238. Lucila Irizarry Cruz, *CAL: Una historia clandestina (1968-1972)* (San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2010).
[252] Antonio Gaztambide, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR (December 2018).
[253] "FUPI refuta a los faccionalistas," *Claridad* (January 14, 1968), 3.
[254] "XIII Congreso FUPI respalda lucha armada en América Latina," *Información Estudiantil* (1968). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

served as an alternative to the Republican Statehood Party.[255] The Puerto Rican Independence Party participated in the 1968 elections as well, nominating Antonio J. Gonzalez.[256] Rather than endorsing the Puerto Rican Independence Party, the FUPI favored the MPI, which again led an electoral boycott campaign. The FUPI argued that the Puerto Rican Independence Party participation in the election distracted its supporters from their own colonial exploitation. *Fupistas* argued that the ELA's elections kept Puerto Ricans alienated from problems in their everyday lives, including the draft.[257]

While the FUPI staunchly supported the electoral boycott, the organization claimed that ideological discussion was beneficial for the struggle in favor of Puerto Rican independence.[258] Considering the broader panorama of social struggle in Puerto Rico, the FUPI deemed campaigns against the draft, mining, and poverty in Puerto Rico to be worthier of its time and resources.[259] While former activists repeatedly stressed to me in interviews that the FUPI was not part of the MPI, *El Mundo* was already characterizing it as the MPI's "university wing", erroneously stating that an organization founded in 1956 was created as an experiment by a movement founded in

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[255] Luis A. Ferré had been one of the leading voices of *Estadistas Unidos*, the faction of Puerto Rico's statehood movement that participated in the 1967 plebiscite. According to Edgardo Meléndez, the expansion of industrial capitalism in Puerto Rico provided conditions for the consolidation of a local industrial bourgeoisie, leading to a break between new economic elites and those whose wealth stemmed from agriculture. This new statehood movement, which was younger and more progressive, sought to stabilize capitalism through the amelioration of class tensions by means of social and economic reform. The Republican Statehood Party nominated Ramiro Colón for governor of Puerto Rico, obtaining less than five thousand votes. Edgardo Meléndez, *Puerto Rico's Statehood Movement*, p. 83-84.

[256] Antonio J. González's candidacy epitomized internal divisions within the Puerto Rican Independence Party, as young leaders like Rubén Berríos Martínez were advocating for social-democratic policies that diverged from the party's elite old guard, which had more Nationalist influence. The Puerto Rican Independence Party electoral failures during the 1960, 1964, and 1968 elections led to criticisms to its then president Gilberto Concepción de Gracia by some sectors of the party. Through an internal vote, the Puerto Rican Independence Party decided to end Concepción de Gracia's presidency in favor of a *presidencia colegiada* that would end up functioning as a triumvirate. Berríos became the leading figure among the group, also made up by Jorge Luis Landing and González, who replaced Concepción de Gracia after his death in March 1968.

[257] "Las elecciones y el SMO," *Información Estudiantil* (1968). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

[258] "Elecciones y huelga electoral," *Información Estudiantil* (1968). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

[259] "Buscar votos no es luchar," *Información Estudiantil* (1968). Compilation 14, AUUPR.

1959.[260] The annexationist New Progressive Party would win the 1968 election in November, marking the beginning of Puerto Rico's two-party system and transforming the ways the independence movement responded to the ELA's policies.

By early 1969, the FUPI again put anti-Vietnam War activism at the center of its rhetoric, claiming victory in its struggle against the draft while calling for an offensive stance against militarism. In January 1969, a jury absolved José del Carmen García, a young man tried for draft dodging after other cases had been dismissed.[261] In its publication *Información Estudiantil*, the FUPI argued that its ultimate goal in combating ROTC was to use the university to weaken imperialism's military efforts in Puerto Rico.[262] Student activists were among the young men tried for draft dodging, enhancing dissatisfaction with the Vietnam War and the presence of military institutions on campus. Florencio Merced, then incoming FUPI president, argued that the organization was "ready to develop a campaign against ROTC as it had never been seen before," a sentiment unanimously reaffirmed by the organization's Executive Committee.[263] The intensification of anti-draft sentiment and the arrival of an annexationist majority to the higher spheres of institutionalized political power in Puerto Rico led to the aggravation of anti-ROTC sentiment at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras from 1969-1971.

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[260] A. Quiñones Calderón, "Ultimos desórdenes en la UPR: ¿Qué está pasando en la Isla?," *El Mundo* (September 30, 1967), p. 2. Editorial: "¿Hasta cuándo la FUPI?," *El Mundo* (Spetember 30, 1967), 6.
[261] "A enfrentar nuevos retos," *Información Estudiantil* (January 15, 1969). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[262] "Lucha contra el SMO: Fase ofensiva," *Información Estudiantil* (January 20, 1969). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[263] "Gran éxito," *Información Estudiantil* (April 30, 1969). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

4.3 Divergent Approaches to Struggle: First ROTC *Quema* and its Aftermath

1969 was the year when draft-dodging became more visible in Puerto Rico's federal courts, enhancing existing anti-Vietnam War sentiment among student activists. By May, the trial of MPI member Edwin Feliciano Grafals caused unrest among the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras pro-independence student organizations. Out of over twenty students charged with draft dodging in Puerto Rico since 1966, only Feliciano Grafals' case remained on trial after the rest were dismissed. As the 1969 Spring semester ended, the FUPI called for two simultaneous campaigns in solidarity with those who combated enlistment: one institutional, for education reform and the defense of Puerto Rican culture; and another related to the draft, which the FUPI considered a national issue.[264] Both the draft and ROTC fell into what the FUPI deemed the impact of US militarism on Puerto Rican youths, interconnecting both struggles on campus. As anti-ROTC and anti-draft sentiment spread on campus, the FUPI claimed that the 1968 election had further polarized Puerto Rican society. Showing its Nationalist bent, the FUPI claimed that the 1968 election forced the archipelago's inhabitants to decide between favoring Puerto Rico (*puertorriqueñistas*) and assimilating in US society (*asimilistas*) with no chance of reaching a middle ground between the two.[265] The isolated protests that the Río Piedras campus witnessed throughout long 1968, along with the approval of Student Rulebook amendments that allowed pickets and meetings on campus, set groundwork for the FUPI's escalation of anti-ROTC struggle during Fall 1969.[266] In an archipelago with an emerging two-party dynamic and constant

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[264] "Nuestra lucha este año," *Información Estudiantil* (May 7, 1969). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[265] "La polarización: Y una tesis fupista," *Información Estudiantil* (August 27, 1969). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[266] Ayala & Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 230.

discussion about the draft's effects in its society, anti-ROTC militancy again became pro-independence organizations' main campaign to voice their dissent against US empire and the Vietnam War more broadly.

This section uses three episodes of student protest occurring throughout the 1969 Fall semester to show how different activist groups responded to discussions surrounding ROTC in the Río Piedras campus. It argues that the three cases responded to the same political and social circumstances: namely the solidification of the New Progressive Party's de facto dominion over university affairs and the exacerbation of anti-Vietnam War sentiment due to resistance to the draft. The first case study is the FUPI's September 26 ROTC arson or *quema,* which showed a return to the FUPI's escalation of anti-ROTC struggle. This approach, however, led to dissenting strategies within Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations and beyond, exemplified by the second case study: a successful hunger strike held by the recently founded Pro-Independence University Youth. Inspired by the US Civil Rights Movement and global peace movements, this organization advocated for non-violent resistance and were supported by Christian groups on campus.[267] The third case study is the right-wing protest known as the *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás* (Parents' March). While its organizers were not members of the university community, pro-ROTC students participated in the demonstration that soon became a riot. This march reflected the fears and contradictions among pro-ROTC sectors, including Cold War anti-communist sentiment. Through an examination of these three case studies, this section illustrates how the ideological diversity of student activism in Río Piedras intensified struggles related to ROTC.

[267] Christian organizing on campus came from both Catholic sectors inspired by Liberation theology and anti-War Protestant groups.

Edwin Feliciano Grafals' trial and sentence in Federal courts were a turning point in the exacerbation of anti-ROTC sentiment in Río Piedras. On September 26, 1969, a jury unanimously found him guilty of draft evasion, with Chief Justice Hiram Cancio sentencing him to one year in prison.[268] According to pro-independence witness David Rodríguez Graciani, jury selection favored pro-statehood citizens who were openly willing to convict Feliciano Grafals for violating the draft.[269] Feliciano Grafals' case caught the attention of all sectors of Puerto Rican society. Pro-independence groups were in solidarity with Feliciano Grafals because of his MPI membership and their perception of US empire as the main agent in his criminalization. Annexationist sectors argued that respect for the Feliciano Grafals' trial and verdict could demonstrate Puerto Rico's allegiance to the United States. Debates regarding Edwin Feliciano Grafals' case elucidated the variety of Puerto Rican perspectives regarding the Vietnam War and the impact its draft had on local populations. This ideological diversity fueled debate between varied sectors of the archipelago's political spectrum, as pro-statehood sectors mostly supported the war the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* rejected, as Popular Democratic Party supporters ranged from supporting US incursion in Vietnam to privately rejecting Puerto Ricans' participation in the war effort.

FUPI activists had been following Feliciano Grafals' case closely, protesting both inside and outside Federal Courts in Old San Juan, roughly a twenty-minute drive from the Río Piedras campus. Some protested in the courtroom right after the sentence was issued while other student activists marched to Río Piedras, arriving promptly to call on all students to abandon classes in protest. The march that ensued, which swelled to up to three thousand participants, ended at the

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[268] "Fiscales tratan evitar publicidad," *Claridad* (August 27, 1967), 4. Norma Valle, "Sentencian Feliciano año cárcel," *El Mundo* (September 27, 1969), 1 & 17A.
[269] Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta?*, 29.

ROTC building, where speakers called for its occupation and arson.[270] The number of participants showed the breadth of opposition to the draft, as the FUPI's membership barely rounded a hundred students.[271] Under Chancellor Díaz González's orders, neither the University Guard nor the police present on the scene intervened with the students who eventually burned the building. The FUPI's September 26's *quema* succeeded in drawing national attention to pro-independence organizations' campaigns against ROTC, with mixed outcomes. Chancellor Díaz González suspended military exercises after a subsequent protest and ordered the Academic Senate to reevaluate ROTC, drawing significant criticism to his administration from annexationist politicians and journalists for what seemed like an open rejection of military education.[272] But the day's violent actions affected the FUPI's organizing, as its leadership was prosecuted by local law enforcement.[273] Both the violence of the *quema* and the criminalization of its supposed organizers motivated other sectors of the student movement to take different approaches to anti-ROTC struggle.

The Pro-Independence University Youth saw violence as detrimental to anti-ROTC struggle and Puerto Rico's national liberation more broadly, motivating it to organize a drastically different action in the aftermath of the FUPI-led *quema*. On October 7, the Pro-Independence

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[270] Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Líder FUPI echa culpa a Rectoría," *El Mundo* (September 27, 1969), 1 & 17A. Merced later claimed that the march that led up to the *quema* had four to five thousand participants. See Estela Ruaño, "Estudiantes desacatarán suspensión," *El Mundo* (September 29, 1969), 1 & 19A.

[271] Oral history narrators differ regarding the FUPI's membership at this time. Some argued that the organization itself rounded about thirty members, a just few beyond its organizing committee. Others highlight the distinction between militants, who were card-carrying members, and sympathizers who might have attended some meetings or demonstrations. Most agreed, however, that the organization's numbers reached their peak during the anti-ROTC period.

[272] Ariel Ortiz Tellechea, "Rector afirma se 'evalúan programas'," *El Mundo* (October 1, 1969), 1 & 8A.

[273] Around thirty *fupistas* were charged with rioting and malicious damages to property. The press paid the most attention to FUPI president and spokesperson Florencio Merced and then president of the National Federation of Puerto Rican Students José "Pepito" Marcano. One can infer that the intellectual leadership that foregrounded its literature were not participating as actively in anti-ROTC protest from the fact that UPR archives hold no bulletins published after the ROTC *quema* until late-November 1969.

University Youth began a hunger strike with participants remaining in the University Tower, the Río Piedras campus' landmark building.[274] Initial press reports showed Christian group *Rescate Estudiantil* (Student Rescue) calling for a hunger strike before the Pro-Independence University Youth began its action.[275] Pro-independence students made up the bulk of the hunger strike's participants and organizers, showing the independence movement's dominance over protest in Río Piedras, and the intersections between organized Christian groups and political collectives on campus. Ten students joined the original twenty-six participants as the hunger strike became indefinite, protesting student suspensions after the *quema* and calling for ROTC's removal from campus.[276] The Pro-Independence University Youth used its bulletin *Liberación*, to argue that pacific militancy allowed students to both demand their rights as citizens and dramatize Puerto Rico's colonial situation.[277] Through this approach, the Pro-Independence University Youth would embody the deterioration of Puerto Rico's circumstances due to its relationship with the United States while addressing a student concern relying on a citizenship that the organization rejected in theory. Former activists remembered how medical students from the University of Puerto Rico's San Juan (Medical Sciences) campus volunteered to monitor the strikers' wellbeing, while the press highlighted the contributions of doctors from the Association of Pro-Independence Physicians, who spoke publicly about the strikers' health and weight loss.[278] The Pro Independence University Youth's hunger strike offered a stark contrast with the FUPI's escalation strategy, which increasingly relied on riots as means of pressuring the university administration into action.

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[274] Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Estudiantes inician huelga de hambre UPR," *El Mundo* (October 8, 1969), 1. José Miguel Pérez, interview by Aura S. Jirau, San Juan, PR (in person), November 27, 2018.
[275] Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Estudiantes defenderán autonomía," *El Mundo* (October 2, 1969), 1 & 23A.
[276] Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Alumnos huelga hambre UPR dan ultimatum," *El Mundo* (October 14, 1969), 1 & 13A.
[277] *Liberación* (October 14, 1969). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR
[278] Rafael Anglada López, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018.

The Pro-Independence University Youth's non-violent approach was effective in rallying sympathy among the university community, leading off-campus conservatives to rely on trivial arguments to criticize an action that was not interrupting university operations. Early in the process, annexationist newspaper *El Mundo* called for a forceful halt to the protest citing public health concerns, as one of its participants was diagnosed with hepatitis.[279] It went on to claim that the Pro-Independence University Youth's "occupation" of the University Tower intended to coerce the Academic Senate to make abrupt decisions regarding ROTC's fate on campus.[280] Others argued that the hunger strike was not authorized by the university administration and that upper tiers of its bureaucracy were being unfair by giving privileges to its participants.[281] While anti-ROTC struggles are largely remembered as having been led by the FUPI, at the time it was the Pro-Independence University Youth's hunger strike that took over headlines. *Fupistas* supported the Pro-Independence University Youth's efforts, but their 1969 mobilizations mostly halted after September as the FUPI's leadership was crippled by criminal charges. In early November, the Pro-Independence University Youth's hunger strike ended with ten protesters remaining after twenty-eight days. At the time Pro-independence University Youth president José Miguel Pérez cited the strikers' health as the main reason for the strike's conclusion.[282] But in a 2018 oral history interview, he told me that the Pro-Independence University Youth actually negotiated with Díaz González's administration to end the strike as the Academic Senate finished its evaluation of ROTC.[283]

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[279] "Terminar la huelga de hambre," *El Mundo* (October 14, 1969), 6A.
[280] "Una lección en democracia," *El Mundo* (October 18, 1969), 6A.
[281] Hunger strikers remained steadfast in continuing their protest, threatening pacific resistance to arrest if the university administration forced them out. Guillermo Hernández, "Estudiantes no harían caso a orden de desalojo," *El Mundo* (October 19, 1969), 1 & 19A. Pérez, interview.
[282] Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Termina la huelga de hambre," *El Mundo* (November 4, 1969), 1 & 19A.
[283] Pérez, interview.

Fall 1969's anti-ROTC protests turned Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations into a lens onto ideological factionalism within Puerto Rico's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. When asked about the hunger strike, the *fupistas* I interviewed stated that they respected the Pro-Independence University Youth's strategies even if they disagreed with them. The FUPI embraced planned clashes intended to radicalize the vision of pro-independence students on campus.[284] The Pro-Independence University Youth aligned with the Puerto Rican Independence Party, led by then young Law Professor Rubén Berríos, who embraced social democracy modeled after Nordic countries and shied away from open confrontation. Meanwhile, when MPI president Juan Mari Brás visited student activists early in the hunger strike and described their actions as gestures of "bravery and sacrifice in the Albizu Campos perspective."[285] This reference reflects Nationalism's ongoing influence in the *Nueva Lucha* and a shared perception of Albizu Campos as a model of action against US empire. Though there were strategic discrepancies between the FUPI and the Pro-Independence University Youth, the campaign against ROTC brought ideological confluence to Río Piedras' pro-independence organizations and the *Nueva Lucha* more broadly, giving a notion of unity and collaboration for militants both in and off-campus.

While the FUPI and the Pro-Independence University Youths differed strategically, the Puerto Rican press often framed them as a single "radical" or "rebellious" youth that wished to take over the University of Puerto Rico for partisan purposes. The groups' actions triggered debate regarding the possibility of the Puerto Rican police's entering the University. Given discourses of *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy) that then dominated discussions on the University

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[284] "Un semestre que viene y otro que se va," *Información Estudiantil* (November 26, 1969). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[285] "Grupo alumnos UPR continúa huelga de hambre," *El Mundo* (October 13, 1969), 3A.

of Puerto Rico's relationship with the ELA government, Puerto Rican law enforcement traditionally entered the Río Piedras campus only when its administrators asked for its intervention. Now, in response to pro-independence mobilizations against ROTC, Governor Luis A. Ferré argued that *autonomía univeristaria* did not allow disorder on campus while other annexationist politicians claimed that the police could not be banned from the institution because it was set in public grounds. *El Mundo* columnist A.W. Maldonado, who represented an annexationist yet old guard Popular Democratic Party-sympathizing perspective, questioned whether the Río Piedras campus was to become a "territory isolated from the rest of the community, a sanctuary where rebellious youth could begin their 'revolution,' where they had so much power that no administrator or politician could challenge them."[286] In their calls for police entry, annexationist sectors of Puerto Rico's political spectrum condemned what they argued was the hyper-politization of students and faculty: those who sympathized with the independence movement and those who supported Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González's pro-ELA reformist administration alike.

Pro-ROTC sectors of the university community would ironically resort to similar strategies as pro-independence student organizations as they sought to protect cadets and *Madrinas'* right to a military education. A case in point is the right-wing *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás*, organized after the Academic Senate voted to remove ROTC from Río Piedras grounds on November 5, 1969.[287] The parents' mobilization represented the culmination of right-wing activism in favor of

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[286] A.W. Maldonado, "Un cambio de política en UPR," *El Mundo* (October 2, 1969), 7A.
[287] The Academic Senate's Academic Affairs Committee published a majority report titled *Enseñanza militar y universidad*, endorsed by 13 out of the Academic Affairs Committee's 17 members, and a minority report written by the dissenting four members. *Enseñanza militar y universidad* declared that ROTC was antithetical to the University's objectives and goals according to the 1966 University Law. It also argued that the Río Piedras campus did not have to comply with the Morrill Land Grant Act's requirement of a military education program, as its grounds were donated by the Puerto Rican government. Moreover, *Enseñanza militar y universidad* asserted that

ROTC in Río Piedras. Ironically, cadets and *Madrinas* were the first to actually call for a student strike during the ROTC protest period, threatening in October 1969 to boycott their classes until the administration guaranteed their right to attendance without harassment.[288] After the *quema* and the beginning of the anti-ROTC hunger strike, cadets were quick to appeal to Puerto Rico's annexationist Governor for his protection, as Luis A. Ferré supported the permanence of military education in Río Piedras. Cadet parents and other concerned families soon formed the *Concilio de Padres de Estudiantes Universitarios* (Council of University Student Parents), a supposedly non-partisan group that sought to bring "peace, security and protection" to Río Piedras' students and professors.[289] Several of its leaders, including New Progressive Party Senator and National Guard General Juan Palerm and lawyer Charles Cuprill, were themselves ROTC alumni. Groups like the *Concilio de Padres* often condemned Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations for their collaborations with off-campus pro-independence collectives. But the pattern was in fact more prominent for right-wing counter-organizing: outside parents and politicians became key in the development of pro-ROTC mobilizations in the Río Piedras campus.

The *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás* was unauthorized, as Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González denied permission to the *Concilio de Padres* citing University of Puerto Rico bylaws that forbade political demonstrations from non-members of the university community.[290] Still, on November 7 General Palerm led a march of pro-ROTC students and parents in adjacent streets,

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ROTC was not a crucial factor in the UPR's budget or cadets' financing their studies, debunking the financial argument for ROTC's permanence. The Academic Affairs Committee considered that ROTC ought be treated as an extra-curricular activity, with its coursework integrated into existing Departments, practical training over the Summers and the redistribution of its resources to other units on campus. It did not advocate for the elimination of military education altogether, but for institutional control over it, enhancing the UPR's *autonomía univeristaria* while pleasing dissenting sectors of the university community. "Enseñanza militar y Universidad" (November, 1969), Box FDO-R1, Compilation 73: "Organización y sus funciones," AUUPR.

[288] Victor Padilla & Roberto Betancourt, "Cadetes ROTC piden protección," *El Mundo* (October 1, 1969), 1 & 8A.

[289] Frank A. Estrada, "Crean organización estudiará caso UPR," *El Mundo* (October 3, 1969), 5B.

[290] "Sucesos ocurridos esta semana en Puerto Rico," *El Mundo* (November 8, 1969), 8A.

demanding military education's permanence on campus as they voiced their dissatisfaction with Chancellor Díaz González and the FUPI.[291] As it spread through the town of Río Piedras, the protest became a violent confrontation between Palerm sympathizers and *fupistas*. Later that day, annexationist agitators burned down the MPI headquarters, which was located a couple of blocks away from campus.[292] While *El Mundo* newspaper at the time mentioned this only in passing, writing that pro-ROTC protesters merely attempted to burn the MPI building, interviewed former activists and student bulletins remember the event with horror. MPI president Juan Mari Brás accused the Puerto Rican police of both leading the pro-ROTC protest and being complicit in the building's arson.[293] While pro-ROTC groups accused pro-independence student organizations of violent agitation, events like the *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás* resembled the FUPI's *quema*, including armed protesters who set fire to a building that to them represented the broader forces that caused political ills in Puerto Rico.

The *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás* inspired an acceleration of right-wing propaganda efforts in Puerto Rico. *Acción Unida Puertorriqueña Anticomunista* (United Puerto Rican Anti-Communist Action/AUPA), likely a cover for US Federal authorities or Cuban exiles, published its first paid advertisement in *El Mundo* newspaper less than a week after the march. It accused the MPI, the Puerto Rican Socialist League and the FUPI of being part of an "international communist plot."[294] One of the AUPA's mottoes was "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." In a series of paid advertisements that spanned a few weeks after the *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás*, the AUPA encouraged parents to share information on their children's ideological changes, arguing

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[291] "Estalla motín en UPR," *El Mundo* (November 8, 1969), 1 & 19A.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Norma Valle, "Asegura policía prepare bombas para ataque MPI," *El Mundo*, express edition (November 11, 1969), 1 & 19A.
[294] "Carta abierta al Consejo de Educación Superior," *El Mundo* (November 14, 1969), 9A.

that "perverse teaching" was part of a great communist conspiracy that aimed to destroy Puerto Ricans' democracy, religiosity, peace, and freedom.[295] If Puerto Ricans were dissatisfied with the "egalitarian character" of their surroundings, it was solely because the "communist system" sought to enslave them by exaggerating any small differences of opinion they might have had.[296] Though AUPA advertisements disappeared by end of 1969, they appealed to Puerto Ricans' concern with higher education and elucidate the ways Cold War anticommunism shaped the ways they perceived student protest.

Edwin Feliciano Grafals did not spend a year in prison after his sentence caused such unrest on the Río Piedras campus. Judge Cancio reduced his sentence by January 1970 to an hour of jail time. Feliciano Grafals endured his punishment sitting in Cancio's office rather than a prison cell. Former activists told me that Cancio was personally opposed to the Vietnam War, and that his sentence showed that he was sentencing Feliciano Grafals out of legal duty rather than moral conviction. In their perspective, Judge Cancio represented an example of generalized Puerto Rican disapproval of involvement in Vietnam.[297] The Vietnam War drew wide opposition from Puerto Rican sectors beyond Leftist collectives and the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. The ROTC *quema* and the subsequent hunger strike became visible youth manifestations against the draft and military education. Events like the *Marcha de los Papás y las Mamás* showed, however, that Fall 1969 was not a period of ideological homogeneity for Río Piedras' students. Well-organized pro-ROTC sectors relied on ample outside support from right-wing sectors off-campus to combat anti-war student groups' strategies. The effects of these conflicts went beyond Río Piedras' student

[295] AUPA advertisement, *El Mundo* (December 9, 1969), 3A.
[296] AUPA advertisement, *El Mundo* (December 17, 1969), 15B.
[297] Silva Gotay, interview, Merced, interview. Rubén Soto Falcón, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018.

body, triggering administrative changes that would transform norms regarding the tenure of university leaders.

4.4 End of an Era: Abrahán Díaz González's Dismissal

Amid both anti- and pro-ROTC protest, Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González remained steadfast in his commitment to university reform and participation from all sectors of its community. Even as Díaz González wished to return Río Piedras to normal academic and administrative operations after the *quema*, he argued that student protest reflected the uneasiness of the archipelago's youth and most adults. Chancellor Díaz González thus diverged greatly from politicians, journalists, and sectors of the general public that framed anti-ROTC sentiment as constrained to infantile rebellious minorities. Abrahán Díaz González's perspective did not remain in power for long, as the Higher Education Council removed him as Chancellor by the end of the Fall 1969 semester.

This section argues that calls for Abrahán Díaz González's resignation and his subsequent dismissal responded to debates regarding 1966 University Law and the abandonment of a variation of the *Casa de Estudios* philosophy represented by the Chancellor's reformism. Voices across Puerto Rico's political spectrum claimed that Díaz González's tolerance of student protest impeded the resolution of campus unrest regarding ROTC. Conservative pro-ROTC sectors argued that Chancellor Díaz González's personal opposition to military education and his reluctance to discipline disruptive activists reflected poor leadership. Meanwhile, pro-independence anti-ROTC activists saw Díaz González as a "Liberal" whose actions were not drastic enough to cause change. The Chancellor's political party had fractured a year earlier, rejecting reformist tendencies

represented by its "Liberal" wing. Left with few supporters in off-campus electoral politics, Abrahán Díaz González represented the decline of progressive sectors recently defeated both within its own party and at the polls.[298]

Calls for university reform plagued the last months of the 1969 Fall semester, which would become the last in Díaz González's tenure as the Río Piedras campus' chancellor. Many blamed the 1966 University Law for Díaz González's supposedly poor administration. Conservative politicians and journalists argued that the decentralization of the University of Puerto Rico's administration hurt the institution, reminiscing about the days when Jaime Benítez's stronghold over everyday life on campus curbed dissent. Along those lines, the press called for action from the Higher Education Council, advocating for at top-down approach to the university administration where campuses had less autonomy over their issues.[299] Meanwhile, pro-independence student organizations, supported by professors with similar political beliefs, also called for university reform. But these anti-ROTC sectors called for a more democratic and participative Law that would not reduce but rather enhance *autonomía universitaria*, granting the University of Puerto Rico enhanced freedom from political appointments. Pro-independence student organizations had used Díaz González's respect for youths' political beliefs and actions to their advantage throughout their struggles against ROTC in the late-1960s. The FUPI went as far as actively denouncing a political plot against the Chancellor in late October 1969, appearing supportive of Díaz González's administration. FUPI president Florencio Merced clarified,

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[298] Puerto Rico's People's Party had little coverage in the archipelago press as former Governor Roberto Sánchez Vilella withdrew from public life. The PP did not offer its outspoken support to officials named during Sánchez Vilella's time at the Popular Democratic Party, leaving them with the option to either align with the New Progressive Party or look for support back in the Popular Democratic Party. Future governor Rafael Hernández Colón was the emerging leadership figure in the latter and bring it to an electoral victory in the 1972 election.
[299] A.W. Maldonado, "La tregua política es decisiva" *El Mundo* (October 18, 1969), 7A.

however, that their denunciation was aimed against the New Progressive Party's intervention in university affairs and was not meant to show support for the Chancellor.[300] The FUPI's disdain for the partisan forces calling for Díaz González's removal trumped the organization's disdain for his conciliatory neutrality. A staunch defender of the 1966 University Law, by November 1969 Chancellor Díaz González was left with few outspoken supporters from activist sectors of the university community.

In matters beyond ROTC, the construction of a new men's dormitory also brought controversy to Abrahán Díaz González's administration.[301] While the chancellor's intentions to expand student housing responded to the University of Puerto Rico's shortcomings, mismanagement led to controversy. The university administration requested construction permits without consulting the Higher Education Council in late 1969. This miscommunication resulted in the project having insufficient funds approved and consequently the denial of construction permits by Federal Housing and Urban Development authorities.[302] According to Ismael Rodríguez Bou, then head of the Office of Urban Planning and Research, the shortage of funds was more related to inflation than administrative miscommunication, as the project originated in 1967 and construction costs had increased.[303] Administrative quarreling regarding Río Piedras' expansion further fueled rumors of Díaz González's removal. It even drew the national press' attention away

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[300] Margarita Babb "Presidente FUPI denuncia complot para despedir Rector de la UPR" *El Mundo* (October 28, 1969), 3A.
[301] The project originally intended to have both a men's and a women's dormitory constructed in front of the Río Piedras campus. Due to a lack of funds, only the men's dormitory ended up built, becoming the present-day *Torre del Norte*. As the university grew and public transportation weakened because of the Puerto Rican government's emphasis on the automobile, more students from Puerto Rico's rural areas needed lodging to complete their degrees in Río Piedras.
[302] "El Rector y las torres," *El Mundo* (December 19, 1969), 6A. Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Rector apelará decisión CES," *El Mundo* (December 13, 1969), 3A.
[303] "Niega Rector violara ley al otorgar subasta edificio dormitorio de varones," *El Mundo* (December 20, 1969), 20A.

from pro-independence student organizations by late Fall 1969, as the FUPI's leadership was prosecuted for the *quema* and the Pro-Independence University Youth's hunger strike had ended. *El Mundo* columnist A.W. Maldonado stated that Díaz González's administration turned "Liberalism" into an ideology that allowed both pro-independence and *soberanista* (in favor of an ELA with sovereign powers) sectors to rally against existing power structures. He went as far as to argue that the FUPI did not cause Río Piedras' crisis, but that the actual problem was the ideological uniformity that controlled its power structures. Unease with student extremism was what turned campus protest into waves of terror.[304] While student activism had administrators' and the Puerto Rican population's attention, administrative issues again catalyzed broader institutional changes that ended up defining the anti-ROTC period.

After the publication the Academic Senate report that called for ROTC's removal from university grounds, which carried the title of *Enseñanza militar y universidad,* Chancellor Díaz González called for mutual understanding between youths and their elders, advocating for empathy for protesters' virtue and "noble rebelliousness." Shortly after the report's release in November 1969, Díaz González argued that the report conciliated three seemingly clashing factors: the university's authority to make decisions about its courses, the university's cooperation with ROTC, and protecting the interests of students who wished to enroll in ROTC coursework.[305]

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[304] A.W. Maldonado, "Liberalismo en el Recinto de Río Piedras," *El Mundo* (November 18, 1969), 7A. In the Puerto Rican context, *soberanismo*, or advocacy for political sovereignty, refers to advocacy for a status option that maintains the archipelago's relationship with the United States while giving it power over issues such as trade and international relations. Nowadays, there are various interpretations of the term, with some arguing for a revision of the ELA status and others advocating for its dissolution in favor of turning Puerto Rico into an associate republic of the United States. Sánchez Vilella's Liberalism could arguably be considered a manifestation of *soberanismo* because of its debates with Muñoz Marín's ELA project.

[305] Abrahán Díaz González, "La situación universitaria," in Díaz González, *Universidad y sociedad,* 165-192. "Enseñanza militar y Universidad" (November, 1969), Box FDO-R1, Compilation 73: "Organización y sus funciones," AUUPR.

However, Chancellor Díaz González's conviction that the Academic Senate's mandate governed Río Piedras' affairs would not carry the day. On the contrary, almost immediately after the publication of the Academic Senate's report and recommendation in early November, the government-instituted Higher Education Council declared that ROTC would remain on campus indefinitely. The University of Puerto Rico's highest administrative body has resembled a board of trustees since its founding, and the Council was a post-1966 iteration with members appointed by the governor of Puerto Rico. The pro-ROTC decision came amid personnel changes in the Higher Education Council and widespread calls from New Progressive Party politicians for Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González resignation. In November 1969 Popular Democratic Party supporter Manuel García Cabrera resigned from the Higher Education Council after twenty-eight years in the University, supposedly in protest of the politization of both the administrative body and the university community.[306] Governor Ferré named Osvaldo Toro, an annexationist architect who was not a member of the New Progressive Party, as García Cabrera's replacement.[307] This appointment changed gave the Higher Education Council a pro-statehood, and consequently pro-ROTC, majority.

Chancellor Díaz González argued that the Higher Education Council's decision to keep ROTC on campus went against the university community's mandate, as it dismissed the findings of *Enseñanza militar y universidad*. Meanwhile, the Higher Education Council named a new committee to evaluate ROTC's presence on campus led by Esther Seijo de Zayas, a vocal pro-

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[306] "Renuncia Manuel García Cabrera al CES," *El Mundo, express edition* (November 12, 1969), 1 & 10A. Popular Democratic Party members of the Higher Education Council tended to favor administrative stability inspired by the longevity of Jaime Benítez's chancellorship from the early-1940s through the mid-1960s. Their respect for *autonomía universitaria* up to that moment kept them from intervening in administrative affairs up to that point in the University's trajectory.

[307] Víctor M. Padilla & Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Apoya concepto Casa de Estudios," El Mundo (November 15, 1969), 1 & 19A.

ROTC member of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Río Piedras campus' Academic Senate who had dissented from the Committee majority's report that resulted in *Enseñanza militar y universidad*.[308] To respond, in December 1969 the Chancellor summoned the Academic Senate for a meeting in which the only item in the agenda was discussing the Higher Education Council's ROTC decision. The Higher Education Council used this call to declare Río Piedras' chancellorship vacant. The reasons cited for the change were Díaz González's failure to communicate with the University's presidency and his disagreements with the Higher Education Council.

The Chancellor's dismissal would be a pivotal point in the trajectory of the University of Puerto Rico's relationship with the state, becoming the first episode of open partisan quarreling regarding the University administration. The Higher Education Council's vote to leave Río Piedras' Chancellorship vacant split along party lines. Popular Democratic Party-sympathizing members Celestina Zalduondo and José Trías Monge voted against Díaz González's removal, arguing that there were no academic reasons to dismiss him.[309] They shared Díaz González's belief that calls for a new chancellor were part of a plot for an annexationist takeover of the University of Puerto Rico.[310] Whether or not there were predetermined plans to remove Díaz González, the New Progressive Party's opposition to student unrest in Río Piedras reflected their rejection of the Chancellor's conciliatory stance to students' political engagement, in favor of a more technocratic approach to the University administration.

The termination of Abrahán Díaz González's tenure as University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus' chancellor sparked public debate regarding the reasons for his dismissal, most of

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[308] "Comité discute caso ROTC," *El Mundo*, express edition (December 9, 1969), 5B.
[309] "Llaman a reunion complot politico," *El Mundo* (December 23, 1969), 1 & 19A.
[310] "Expresa pretenden as altar, apoderarse de la Universidad," *El Mundo* (December 20, 1969), 1 & 20A.

which revolved around political issues. Popular Democratic Party politicians criticized the annexationist Higher Education Council for removing Chancellor Díaz González. But they cited procedural issues for Díaz González's dismissal rather than outright support for his policies. This made evident the remaining fractures between the pro-ELA establishment and its Liberal wing that still shared former Governor Roberto Sánchez Vilella's reformist tendencies.[311] The Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico's Regional Colleges and Popular Democratic Party governing board member Roberto Rexach Benítez argued that administrative changes would not halt student mobilizations because the students were part of a global protest wave against their society's hypocrisy.[312]

The University of Puerto Rico's wider academic community and intellectuals off-campus showed more nuanced reasonings regarding the end of Abrahán Díaz González's chancellorship. The Association of Puerto Rican University Professors exhorted University faculty to organize to resist the institution's "capture" by outside political forces.[313] The president of Puerto Rico's Athenaeum, one of the archipelago's most esteemed cultural centers, claimed that annexationist forces that favored cultural assimilation to the United States "could not tolerate a chancellor of true university vocation and genuine Liberal mentality."[314]

In contrast, the New Progressive Party saw the end of Díaz González's tenure as chancellor as precisely the beginning of the depolitization of the Río Piedras campus. New Progressive Party youth leader and former student activist Orestes Ramos claimed that Díaz González's dismissal

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[311] "Ve peligro intromisión partidista," El Mundo (December 23, 1969), 1 & 19A. "Repudian destitución Rector Abrahán Díaz González," *El Mundo* (December 25, 1969), 8A.
[312] Juan Cepero, "Propone pesquisa en actuación CES despido Rector," *El Mundo* (December 27, 1969), 5C.
[313] "Ven acción arbitraria, ilegítima," *El Mundo* (December 22, 1969), 1 & 16A.
[314] "Ve destitución Díaz como 'retroceso' UPR," *El Mundo* (December 27, 1969), 13B.

would aid in the removal of his team, which Ramos labeled as "radical communists."[315] A few days after Díaz González's firing, Secretary of Education and Higher Education Council member Ramón Mellado echoed the voices of the *Concilio de Padres* and criticized the faculty members that used their academic freedom to turn the University of Puerto Rico into a "center for political indoctrination."[316]

Ultimately, debates regarding the political character of Abrahán Díaz González's dismissal as the Río Piedras campus' chancellor reflected ideological differences between elected factions of the Popular Democratic Party and the New Progressive Party. While different in their approaches to Puerto Rico's status question, both contingents were dissatisfied with Díaz González's administration because they saw it as enabling both "Liberal" reformists, who had been ousted from the Popular Democratic Party, and pro-independence radicals. As University of Puerto Rico professor Leopold Kohr noted, Abrahán Díaz González essentially fired himself.[317] His political views did not align with those of any political group who could assert power in the University, leaving Díaz González to fend for himself in the middle of turbulent times in Río Piedras.

Though rarely emphasized by former activists or chronicles of anti-ROTC struggles, Abrahán Díaz González's dismissal is key to understanding the University of Puerto Rico's relationship with the archipelago government from the 1970s through the present. Díaz González correctly claimed that there was no precedent for his removal. His dismissal represented a New Progressive Party administrative takeover and what would become a pattern in its interpretation

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[315] Bartolomé Bringnoni, "Afirma destitución Rector lleva a 'despolitización' UPR," *El Mundo* (December 24, 1969), 18C.
[316] Bernardo Guerra Prados, "Critica mal uso de la cátedra," *El Mundo* (December 29, 1969), 1 & 16A.
[317] Leopold Kohr, "La despedida de Díaz González," *El Mundo* (December 29, 1969), 7A.

(or violation) of the University of Puerto Rico's *autonomía universitaria*. The University establishment would come to serve the specific agenda of Puerto Rico's ruling parties and shift along with electoral patterns. Even as partisan administrative changes became normalized in the University's context, the legacies of the *Casa de Estudios*' approach to the role of students in the university would permeate into annexationist approaches to higher education for the following two decades. Students were to engage with traditionally educational activities on campus, and politics would only come into play in professor-student exchanges in the classroom. The New Progressive Party's changes to the university administration would end up exacerbating protests related to ROTC in 1970 and 1971, further radicalizing pro-independence sectors against the University as an institution rather than toward more abstract notions of military education as an imperialist venture.

El Mundo columnist Miguel A. Santín, who was connected to a reactionary contingent within Puerto Rican annexationism, compared the Río Piedras campus' pro-ROTC community members to Spiro Agnew's silent majority, arguing that they did not dare speak because of lack of protection. Unlike anti-ROTC student activists and professors, they did not have a champion in the figure of the Chancellor.[318] Díaz González's dismissal represented the end of reformist administrators' stronghold over the Río Piedras campus' development, as most resigned in solidarity with the Chancellor. Santín's peer A.W. Maldonado drew a comparison between Díaz González and the figure of former Governor Roberto Sánchez Vilella, arguing that they both attacked their superiors (Muñoz and Benítez) and hindered modernization projects, in this case represented by Ferré's government's approach to higher education.[319] By getting rid of Díaz

[318] Miguel A. Santín, "Trasfondo," *El Mundo* (December 24, 1969), 7A.
[319] A.W. Maldonado "Aprender de los errores," *El Mundo* (December 23, 1969), 7A.

González, pro-statehood administrators acted in favor of what they considered the depolitization of the University. Yet the New Progressive Party's call for a less politicized environment was actually selective, referring to an anti-independence stance. While conservative sectors cheered Díaz González's exit as a step toward the depolitization of the University, his dismissal in fact made actions related opposing visions for Puerto Rico's development and the role its youth had in its progress more visible and radical.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter re-framed 1967-1969 as the first phase of a period of broad protest anchored in causes surrounding military education in the University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras campus. During this period, belligerents emerged from across Puerto Rico's political spectrum. I argued that anti-ROTC sentiment was influenced by broader transformations related to generational changes in Puerto Rican politics. While many consider the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* and the Vietnam War as the main factors triggering disdain against military education, the peak of this first phase coincided with the transition from Popular Democratic Party hegemony over university affairs towards a two-party scenario with an annihilated pro-ELA reformist branch. Just as Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González was dismissed by conservative annexationist and pro-Benítez forces, other "Liberals" who wished to change the Popular Democratic Party and the ELA as a project more broadly were ousted from their positions. The symbiosis between on and off-campus pro-independence sectors remained key for the development of student struggles in the University of Puerto Rico. Anti-ROTC protest in Río Piedras during the late-1960s reflects the impact of youths in both the *Nueva Lucha* and Puerto Rican party politics more broadly.

The ROTC protest period sheds light on the multiple causes of student unrest in the Río Piedras campus. Global protest and opposition to the Vietnam War and the US-imposed draft served as international triggers for student dissatisfaction with military education. The FUPI's long history of anti-ROTC activism began reaching its climax in the late-1960s, coinciding with the enhanced visibility of actions from the other pro-independence organizations. Meanwhile, pro-ROTC students also organized in response to the FUPI's strategies, expanding conservative activism in Río Piedras. Politically, internal debate within the Popular Democratic Party and the emergence of the New Progressive Party led to overarching questioning of the way the university administration dealt with student protest. After much institutional debate, Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González was left alone advocating for policies from ideological trends no longer represented in the Puerto Rican government. Popularly known as part of a broader period of *luchas contra el ROTC,* or anti-ROTC struggles, the ROTC protest period reflected the complexity of Río Piedras students' political ideologies and how they shaped campus protest during the late-1960s.

1967-1969 saw the last administration with administrators who sought to advance the University of Puerto Rico project as a compliment to the ELA's developmentalist policies. Still, long-time FUPI activist and later president Florencio Merced romanticized the late-1960s university administration as one of true *universitarios* (men committed to higher education above all) during an oral history interview in 2018, ironically glorifying leaders who punished him.[320] The following years became the most violet in the history of the Río Piedras campus, with the FUPI's confrontational approach leading to repeated clashes with the Puerto Rican police and the

[320] Merced, interview. University of Puerto Rico disciplinary processes would end up punishing Merced with what was then considered to be a lifetime suspension from the institution. Merced would transition directly into the leadership of the MPI, becoming an important figure in both its transition toward electoral politics and organizing in the diaspora.

eventual removal of ROTC from Río Piedras' grounds. Student activism's unfolding over these years, and through the 1970s, would again align with developments within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, affected by internal strife and government repression, and responding to economic crises in the archipelago and beyond.

As we will see in the next chapter, the dawn of a new decade would lead to a period of reorganization for pro-independence student organizations in Río Piedras, recovering their forces after their leadership was criminalized and fighting against a different set of administrators appointed by the Puerto Rican government. Student activists from the University of Puerto Rico system would both culminate anti-ROTC struggle and embark on a new agenda of student-worker solidarity from the early to mid-1970s.

5.0 Chapter 4 – From Anti-Militarism to Student-Worker Alliances: Protest and Striking in the Río Piedras Campus 1970-1976

Puerto Rico's political movements experienced a series of crises during the 1970s. The *Estado Libre Asociado* (Associated Free State/ELA) government's two-party dynamic became normalized, with increasingly polarized discussions mainly revolving around the archipelago's relationship with the United States. The Popular Democratic Party remained steadfast in its support for the ELA while the New Progressive Party expanded its right-wing annexationist agenda that favored US statehood for the archipelago. Meanwhile, the independence movement had skirmishes of its own. The militancy of the *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI) reconsidered its stance on electoral politics after a failed effort to collaborate with the Puerto Rican Independence Party. The MPI became the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in 1972, embracing Marxist-Leninist elements in its platforms. Its supporters adopted a vanguardist perspective on Puerto Rican independence, which they declared would come through a workers' revolution.[321] Meanwhile, the Puerto Rican Independence Party experienced its own crisis after the 1972 election, with a social democrat sector expelling dissenting members, some of whom were younger and openly socialist. This period of instability within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* occurred amid a series of events that showed the ELA's shortcomings as a political model.

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[321] The transition period between the MPI and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party has been subject of substantial academic and activist discussions. See Ángel Agosto, *Del MPI al PSP: El eslabón perdido* (Río Grande: La Casa Editora de Puerto Rico, 2018); Agosto, *Lustro de gloria: Cinco años que estremecieron el siglo,* third edition (Río Grande: Editorial Tiempo Nuevo, 2014); Ángel Pérez Soler, *Del Movimiento Pro-Independencia al Paritdo Socialista Puertorriqueño: La transición de la lucha nacionalista a la lucha de los trabajadores* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2018).

Two decades after the ELA's ratification, Puerto Rico's discussions about status overshadowed deteriorating economic conditions. The archipelago felt the effects of the global energy crisis and began experiencing its first major economic recession in the mid-1970s. Unemployment and income inequality began increasing as international factors triggered the downfall of the archipelago's petrochemical industries, which had provided jobs after Operation Bootstrap's export-based manufacturing model fractured.[322] Elected in 1972, pro-ELA Governor Rafael Hernández Colón not only increased the state's intervention in economic affairs, but his administration raised Puerto Rico's reliance on external debt to continue ongoing development projects.[323] Hernández Colón's government also began implementing the first austerity measures in the ELA's history to mitigate financial hardship. Economic strife was among the reasons leading to the growth of Puerto Rico's labor movement during this time, with the government responding with punitive governance and repression toward radicalized sectors.[324] The Puerto Rican police expanded its surveillance of local activists, building on record-keeping initiatives characterized by files popularly known as *carpetas*.[325] Coming of age right after what social scientists referred to as the "sober generation," some Puerto Rican youths with pro-independence sympathies would

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[322] For more information on the transition from Operation Bootstrap manufacturing to petrochemical industries see Eliezer Curet Cuevas, *Economía política de Puerto Rico: 1950-2000* (San Juan: Ediciones M.A.C., 2003). Aviva Chomsky also discussed the loss of Puerto Rico's manufacturing industries to other areas of the developing world as part of her larger analysis on economic integration and globalization Aviva Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories: New England, Colombia, and the Making of a Global Working Class* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
[323] Eliezer Curet Cuevas, *Economía política de Puerto Rico: 1950 a 2000* (San Juan: Ediciones M.A.C., 2003).
[324] Marisol LeBrón, *Policing Life and Death: Race, Violence and Resistance in Puerto Rico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).
[325] The phenomenon of "carpeteo" or the construction of files related to Puerto Rican political leaders and activists, has a long trajectory in Puerto Rico. Oral history narrators often recall identifying informants among their activist circles and communities who fed data to Police, claiming that persecution was among the main reasons for their difficulties finding employment. Scholarship on the topic includes Ramón Bosque Pérez & José Javier Colón Morera, eds. *Las carpetas: Persecusión política y derechos civiles en Puerto Rico, ensayos y documentos* (Rio Piedras: Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997); José Martínez Valentín, *Cien años de carpeteo en Puerto Rico, 1901-2000* (Caguas, 2001); Luis Nieves Falcón, *Un siglo de represión política en Puerto Rico, 1898-1998* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2009).

become key collaborators in social and labor mobilizations that responded to economic hardship throughout the 1970s.[326]

Even though the United States decreased its reliance on the Vietnam War draft in the early 1970s, student protests that began in opposition continued. The University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras campus had served as one of the centers of youth mobilizations in the archipelago as pro-independence students rallied their peers with campaigns against military education, beginning in 1967 and accelerating in 1969, as traced in the previous chapter. Writing for pro-independence tabloid *Claridad*, MPI, and later Puerto Rican Socialist Party president Juan Mari Brás argued that university students were the sector that had the best political and organizational quality for integration in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* in contrast with the bulk of Puerto Rican society, including workers and the poor.[327] Indeed, Mari Brás proudly asserted that the MPI exerted influence in the University in the early-1970s, deeming it the first line of combat in active struggle in favor of independence.[328] Comments like Mari Brás' fueled political pundits who claimed that Puerto Rican youths were being indoctrinated by pro-independence organizations in the University. Though the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (Federation of University Students for Independence/FUPI) was independent from the MPI, pro-independence organizations relied on university students to feed their leadership ranks, paving the way for an increasingly Leftist rhetorical bent.

While popular perceptions about pro-independence student activism in the University of Puerto Rico system remained negative after the ROTC protest period, the pro-ELA, annexationist

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[326] Ramón Fernández Marina, Ursula von Eckardt & E. Maldonado Sierra, *The Sober Generation: Children of Operation Bootstrap; a topology of coping by adolescents in modern Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: University of Puerto Rico Press, 1969).
[327] Angel M. Agosto, "La lucha estudiantil," *Claridad* (March 7, 1972), 11.
[328] Juan Mari Brás, "Universidad y revolución," *Claridad* (October 12, 1969), 4.

and pro-independence political establishments also took an opportunity to rally politicized youths at the polls. Even as radicalized students made their voices heard on campus and in the streets, the annexationist government held a referendum on November 1970 to lower the voting age to 18 years old. In a period when most Puerto Ricans kept supporting either pro-ELA or annexationist politicians regardless of their shortcomings, trajectories of campus protest occurring in University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras campus serve to trace transformations within the *Nueva Lucha.* Pro-independence student activists in Río Piedras reflected incipient rhetorical and strategic changes within that movement even before some transitioned into organizational leadership off-campus. Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations responded to shifts within Puerto Rico's economic panorama, debates within its two-party political scenario, and electoral campaigns even as they mirrored the growth, debates and eventual crises of Puerto Rico's independence movement. The actions staged by students during the 1970s also demonstrated awareness of the structural issues that potentially reduced the prospects for archipelago youths to access the Puerto Rican middle class.

This chapter argues that protest and institutional transformations in the Río Piedras campus responded to the ELA's economic hardship in the 1970s. The second phase of the ROTC protest period went beyond military education, resulting in enhanced calls for university reform and increased student participation in administrative processes due to student activists' recognition of the constraints of their political power in a colonized setting. As the ELA's faults as a political model became more visible, some pro-independence sectors began favoring socialist platforms to offer a revolutionary platform against Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States. Pro-independence student organizations played a key role in shaping these changes as they began advocating for student-worker unity, anchored in discourses with a Marxist-Leninist bent. This

rhetoric responded to increased organizing within the labor movement, which was triggered by lackluster compensation in contrast with increases in the cost of living in Puerto Rico.

Pro-independence student activists thought of themselves as future members of the working class, even though their education would often grant them access to middle class comforts, and saw workers as a potential vanguard for revolutionary struggle in favor of national liberation and socialism.[329] Influenced by successful workers' struggles undertaken by independent labor unions in the public and private sectors, pro-independence student organizations began resorting to striking by the mid-1970s, the same time the ELA's crises became more explicit. Changes in pro-independence student organizing during this period serve to trace the evolution of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, including the MPI's warming up to electoral politics, debates between the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and the emergence of revolutionary organizations that sought to be an alternative to what they concluded were centrist or Nationalist collectives. Economic crises marked social mobilization in Puerto Rico more broadly, forever changing the pro-independence student organizations' strategies and strengthening their ties with organized labor.

This chapter will be divided into four sections. The first section deals with the second phase of the ROTC protest period. It argues that administrative changes resulted in the diversification of strategies against military education, resulting in disagreements between pro-independence student organizations. Student-worker unity rhetoric and political-economic issues off-campus would further shape calls for a more participatory university as student organizations shifted their attention toward reform after the removal of ROTC from campus. The second section delves into

[329] The usage of the term "working class" is mostly restricted to Leftist pro-independence organizations in the Puerto Rican context, as the growth of white collar and service industries in Puerto Rico led to increased usage of the term "middle class" to identify employed Puerto Ricans.

changes within pro-independence student organizations in the Río Piedras campus from 1970-1976, showing that student-worker unity discourses tied these collectives together regardless of their disagreements, which responded to crises within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* off-campus. The third section explores a student strike that occurred during the 1973 Fall semester, the first time students resorted to this form of resistance since 1948. It explores student-worker unity discourses as the key factor in the development of this conflict in favor of university reform, eventually shutting down university operations. Moreover, it asserts that workers were inspired to strike alongside students because of uncertainty caused by Puerto Rico's economic woes becoming more evident. The final part discusses student participation in a 1976 workers' strike that occurred in Río Piedras. It argues that this student-worker strike was the first defined by austerity measures in the University of Puerto Rico, making the impact of financial recession in government institutions explicit. The way the university administration approached the 1976 strike would become standard in response to student conflicts from the late-twentieth century onward. This chapter as a whole presents the Río Piedras campus as a case study to explore the relationship between institutionalized political power and social mobilization within the context of the early crises of Puerto Rico's ELA.

5.1 Blood on Campus: The Second Phase of the ROTC Protest Period

After the Higher Education Council fired Chancellor Abrahán Díaz González in December 1969, some Puerto Rican political pundits breathed a sigh of relief. They argued that the Liberal chancellor's tolerance of student dissent was the main culprit in the intensification of anti-ROTC mobilizations in Río Piedras during the late-1960s. Yet 1970 and 1971, the last two years of the

ROTC protest period, would in fact be some of the most violent in the history of the Río Piedras campus. Four people died during this second phase of the ROTC protest period, including Antonia Martínez Lagares, who is now considered a martyr of Puerto Rican student struggle. Administrative changes are a key to understanding the intensification of anti-ROTC protest in Río Piedras and the participation of students who were not necessarily organized with pro-independence organizations in actions framed as in favor of university reform. Moreover, discussions on the use of violence within student struggle and police intervention to curb campus protest during this period would shape subsequent mobilizations after the removal of ROTC ceased being at the center of student activist platforms.

This section argues that administrative changes triggered by the annexationist Puerto Rican government led to the diversification of strategies against ROTC and the development of discourses in favor of university reform. While the MPI and the FUPI, its Río Piedras ally, began evaluating an electoral alternative to validate their positions, the latter's reliance on violence was the main trigger that brought institutional change related to military education in Río Piedras. Student organizations, however, disagreed in their approaches to the role of violence in protest, leading to divisions within pro-independence student collectives that would reshape campus struggles over the 1970s. Meanwhile, between violent incidents related to ROTC, mobilizations in the College of Social Sciences redirected student activists' focus toward university reform, a dynamic that would define pro-independence student organizations' demands throughout the 1970s. These calls for university reform would evolve until striking came to be seen as a useful strategy against what student organizations claimed were institutional and structural crises at the University and Puerto Rico more broadly.

Shortly after Chancellor Díaz González's dismissal, the Higher Education Council went against the recommendations of the Academic Senate and determined that ROTC could remain in Río Piedras with curricular revisions. This decision triggered a new wave of student protest and emboldened conservative pro-ROTC sectors. Cadets began wearing their uniforms to class, previously forbidden to prevent attacks against them, as right-wing provocateurs staged actions both on and off-campus.[330] Energized by conservative parents' organizing a year prior and following the trajectory of the *Asociación Universitaria Pro-Estadidad* (Pro-Statehood University Association/AUPE) and the *Frente Anticomunista Universitario* (Anticommunist University Front/FAU), pro-ROTC student groups like *Universitarios Unidos* (United University Students), *Acción Progresista* (Progressive Action), Young Americans for Freedom and the Committee for the Defense of ROTC continued rallying students who opposed pro-independence student organizing.[331] Soon after deciding on the permanence of ROTC, the Higher Education Council also named Pedagogy professor and longtime university administrator Pedro José Rivera as Río Piedras' chancellor. While Rivera had been one of the figures leading the effort to make ROTC training voluntary in 1960, his becoming Río Piedras' chancellor was the first explicitly political transition in the institution's post-1942 history, with some arguing that he became the preferred candidate due to his support for military education. Anti-ROTC activist sectors were certain that Rivera would engage with partisan annexationist agendas for the university and do whatever it was necessary to protect ROTC, which he deemed a valid career choice for Puerto Rican students. Pro-independence student organizations now faced more confrontational opponents that some believed

[330] "Cadete ROTC insulta y agrede joven vendía Claridad en Santurce," *Claridad* (August 23, 1970), 15.
[331] David Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta?: La lucha estudiantil en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Puerto, 1972), 102. *Acción Progresista* served as an annexationist youth organization on campus associated with the New Progressive Party.

represented the state's opposition to the increasing strength of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.

The first time when Rivera's approach to student dissent affected the outcome of student protest in Río Piedras was on May 4, 1970. This day became embedded in the history of campus activism in Río Piedras due to the killing of Antonia Martínez Lagares. Antonia died in the aftermath of an anti-ROTC protest organized by the *Comité de Acción Femenina Universitaria* (Committee for Feminine Action on Campus). The FUPI was one of the march's co-sponsors, and its then interim president Flavia Rivera, speaking to reporters at the time, connected anti-ROTC struggles with Puerto Rico's feminist movement, claiming that they both struggled for Puerto Rican dignity.[332] *El Mundo* newspaper's coverage claimed that in the afternoon, after the march, "hundreds" of Socialist League student militants began a "battle royale with stones, bullets, shotguns and Molotov cocktails, resulting in a second arson of the ROTC building" the first of which was planned by the FUPI in 1969, as described in Chapter 3.[333] Chancellor Rivera promptly requested police intervention on campus, which resulted in a skirmish that ran students off-campus and into the streets of the city of Río Piedras. Antonia was shot in the balcony of a student residence meters away from campus after an exchange with a police officer. A police officer was accused of Antonia's death, but the case did not make it out of local court hearings that occurred from June through October 1970. Pro-independence sectors both mourned Antonia's death and used her as an example of someone who paid the ultimate price for national liberation.[334]

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[332] Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Piquete enciende motín," *El Mundo* (March 5, 1970), p. 1.
[333] The Socialist League was a group led by then socialist pro-independence leader Juan Antonio Corretjer. While the League did not openly advocate for armed struggle, oral history narrators have characterized their sympathizers as more violent than those of the FUPI, the Pro-Independence University Youth or smaller groups.
[334] Alba Raquel Cabrera, Roberto Betancourt & José Reguero, "Tratan Qumar Sede ROTC; Fuerza Choque Entra Campus," *El Mundo* (March 5, 1970), p. 1; Hiram Sánchez Martínez, *Antonia: Tu nombre es una historia* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2019).

Antonia Martínez's killing revived debates regarding the role of clandestine armed groups in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. An often-overlooked result of Antonia's death was the reappearance of the *Comandos Armados de Liberación* (Armed Liberation Commandos/CAL), the group that had placed bombs protesting ROTC in the Río Piedras campus on September 23, 1968. The CAL killed two marines to avenge her death and went on to stage a second wave of attacks in the early 1970s, targeting US based businesses they claimed to be impediments to Puerto Rico's own economic development. Disagreements over the use of clandestine violence again divided the MPI, which then did not explicitly reject armed struggle as part of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. An ensuing schism led to many of the MPI's most important leaders, such as founding FUPI member Norman Pietri, to abandon the organization in favor of the more moderate and nonviolent Puerto Rican Independence Party.[335] Present-day student activist sectors represent Antonia Martínez Lagares' death a traumatic event, but back in the 1970s, activists rapidly bounced back and changed strategies to continue anti-ROTC protest.

Pro-independence student organizations collaborated again later in March 1970 to mobilize votes in a student-organized referendum regarding ROTC shortly after Antonia's assassination. According to then-suspended FUPI president Florencio Merced, annexationist student Orestes Ramos suggested the referendum in a student assembly, convinced that anti-ROTC activists were a minority on campus.[336] Pro-independence organizations used the referendum to inquire about what they considered to be an insufficient University Law and to show opposition against pro-ELA University President Jaime Benítez, who had formerly been chancellor of the Río Piedras campus. The FUPI campaigned for the "Yes" in the referendum's three queries: the dismissal of

[335] Angel M. Agosto, *Lustro de gloria*; Lucila Irizarry Cruz, *CAL: Una historia clandestina (1968-1972)* (San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2010).
[336] Florencio Merced, interview with Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018.

ROTC from Río Piedras, a new university reform and the end of Jame Benítez's presidency.[337] The "Yes" vote won in the questions regarding ROTC and university reform but lost when it came to Benítez. While the majority supported his tenure as an administrator, the FUPI argued that this loss actually worked in their favor, as its opponents could not claim there was electoral fraud.[338] Former activists still joke that the 1970 student referendum was the only electoral victory for Puerto Rico's independence movement, acknowledging its historically poor performance in the archipelago's elections.[339] Merced highlighted the impact of the referendum during a 2018 oral history interview, stating that it showed the administration that most students disagreed with ROTC's presence on campus and that there was no supportive "silent majority."[340] The results of the March 1970 referendum also showed that while small, pro-independence student organizations exerted significant ideological influence on Río Piedras' students.

The referendum gave the FUPI confidence that their campaign to remove ROTC from campus was succeeding, yet campus struggles were far from over. Chancellor Rivera named Jenaro Collazo Dean of the College of Social Sciences, ignoring the recommendations of a Consultation Committee made up by faculty and students. The Social Sciences' Student Council thus began an intense campaign against Collazo. Former activists highlight this struggle in the College of Social Sciences as one of the most participative struggles in the ROTC protest period, one that drew student support beyond the usual members of pro-independence student organizations.[341] The FUPI would soon support this campaign, using it as an opportunity to call for more student

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[337] "Referendum hoy: A votar todos," *Información Estudiantil* (March 18, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[338] "El referéndum," *Información Estudiantil* (April 2, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[339] Merced, interview. Rafael Anglada Lopez, interview with Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR October 16, 2018.
[340] Merced, interview.
[341] Jorge Rodríguez, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018. José Añeses, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018.

participation in administrative affairs. Actions in the College of Social Sciences resulted in a shift in student activists' discourse toward prioritizing demands for more participative university reform, as the FUPI redirected its struggle beyond ROTC to oppose all who supported military education, including the Higher Education Council, the Academic Senate, and Río Piedras' chancellor.[342] In bulletins circulated in the Río Piedras campus, the FUPI argued that opposing institutional powers would not only shift the focus of student struggle but that it would develop their peers' critical mentality, exposing the university's class structure and the impossibility of changing it though the existing colonial regime.[343]

Other student groups disagreed with the FUPI's overall tactics while agreeing with its prioritizing campus issues and the goal of enhancing student voices during late-1970 and early-1971. While originally supporting the resignation of Dean Collazo, the Pro-Independence University Youth disagreed with the FUPI's campaign against him. The Pro-Independence University Youth argued that student activists needed to focus their energies on pressuring administrative and legislative bodies to work on a new University Law, deeming struggles in the College of Social Sciences an unnecessary confrontation.[344] Professor and MPI member Manuel Maldonado Denis wrote at the time that the struggle against Collazo symbolized the political polarization of platforms for the University's institutional development. Those who favored reform often favored Puerto Rican independence, while those who sought to preserve the status quo favored annexationism.[345] The main takeaway from the struggle against Jenaro Collazo was its

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[342] "Rotundo éxito el primer mítin," *Información Estudiantil* (August 26, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[343] "La reforma y el caso de sociales," *Información Estudiantil* (October 8, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[344] *Liberación* (1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR. "El co-gobierno," *Liberación* (September 9, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Visita al decanato," *Liberación* (October 16, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[345] Manuel Maldonado Denis, "El problema de Ciencias Sociales," *Claridad* (August 30, 1970), 12.

showing that challenges to institutional authorities resonated in student councils across the Río Piedras campus regardless of the political affiliation of their individual members.

The 1970 Fall semester was relatively calm in part due to the administration's moving ROTC drill exercises to Fort Buchanan, roughly 20 minutes away from Río Piedras.[346] But by March 1971 tensions on campus ran high once more. The FUPI and the Pro-Independence University Youth overlooked their differences and collaborated to organize what they named the "Anti-Imperialist Antonia Martínez Day" on March 4, the one-year anniversary of her death. The FUPI claimed that the event was a step in a new wave of escalation of anti-ROTC and Puerto Rican independence struggles more broadly, while the Pro-Independence University Youth solely participated in remembrance of the deceased student.[347]

Little less than a week after the Antonia Martínez Anti-Imperialist Day, on March 11, 1971, a discussion between ROTC cadets and student activists became a violent skirmish. According to David Rodríguez Graciani, an eyewitness pro-independence activist whose sons were students in Río Piedras during this time, cadets planned this confrontation to avenge a recent disagreement between other cadets and student activists that had resulted in administrative punishment for both parties involved.[348] Río Piedras Chancellor Pedro José Rivera did not hesitate to request police intervention. Both student activists and ROTC cadets were armed with Molotov cocktails, rocks, and firearms. The ensuing confrontation between police and the hundreds of students present at the demonstration led to the deaths of two policemen, including Juan Brino Mercado, chief of the

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[346] Sánchez Martínez, *Antonia, tu nombre es una historia*, 344.
[347] "Hoy todos a conmemorar el 4 de marzo," *Información Estudiantil* (March 4, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[348] Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta?*, 108.

Puerto Rican police's Shock Forces, and one cadet.[349] The violence led to the cancellation of classes in Río Piedras for one month and rendered administrative action regarding ROTC urgent.

The events of March 11, 1971 triggered the permanent removal of ROTC from the Río Piedras campus' main grounds. But its effects were felt not only on campus but throughout the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. In moments when the various sectors of Puerto Rico's independence movement called for collaboration to create a united front for the 1972 election, violence in the Río Piedras campus heated existing debates. The FUPI argued that casualties that occurred during March 11's skirmishes were a "victory" for student struggle, but other activist sectors both on and off campus did not share this perspective. The Pro-Independence University Youth claimed that the consequences of the confrontation were detrimental for student struggle in Río Piedras, as they led to the intensification of administrative and legal repression toward activists on campus. Penning the editorial for pro-independence magazine *La Escalera*, professors Gervasio García and Georg Fromm criticized the FUPI's actions during March 11, claiming that they gave the annexationist administration license to establish absolute dominion over the University by dispersing and persecuting pro-independence students and faculty. Further, Fromm and García argued that violence like March 11's could create "national hysteria" among Puerto Ricans, which could work at the government's advantage in its campaign of repression against the *Nueva Lucha*.[350] A few months later, Juan Mestas further attacked former FUPI president Florencio Merced's defense of March 11 in *La Escalera*, claiming that March 11's lessons were unclear, and that the University was not a mere training ground for national struggles. Mestas argued that Puerto Ricans were not class-conscious enough to understand what had happened in Río Piedras, and

[349] Sánchez Martínez, *Antonia, tu nombre es una historia*, 345.
[350] Editorial, "La violencia: Razón moral y razón política," *La Escalera* (February & March, 1971), 4-17.

therefore the struggle required more "slow and quiet" work to organize the archipelago's population.[351] These disagreements added to tensions over the strategic use of violent confrontation and electoral politics. Efforts for a united front made up of the MPI and the Puerto Rican Independence Party toward the 1972 election failed as the FUPI and the Pro-Independence University Youth continued debating over which political body deserved the support of Puerto Rican youths.[352]

On June 17, 1971, Chancellor Pedro José Rivera decided to remove ROTC from the Río Piedras campus by moving drill training and military coursework to the grounds of the University's Experimental Station, roughly a five-minute drive from the Río Piedras campus. The Higher Education Council altered Chancellor Rivera's decision by determining that ROTC training move to grounds across the street from Río Piedras' main campus.[353] While pro-independence student organizations called for ROTC's eradication, activist sectors argued that the physical removal of the program from campus was a victory for student struggle. Yet as we have seen, the ROTC protest period had triggered disagreements between pro-independence student activists, as confrontations with police put the FUPI and the Pro-Independence University Youth against each other due to their differing views regarding the strategic use of violence on campus. In its plan to escalate its struggle against ROTC, the FUPI alienated the Pro-Independence University Youth and other activist sectors on campus by Summer 1971. Nevertheless, over the following decade, sharply divided student organizations would come to share a desire to organize alongside workers on campus.

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[351] Juan Mestas, "Florencio Merced: Su sinrazón política," *La Escalera* (Summer, 1971), 19-23 & 43.
[352] "El desarrollo del partido revolucionario de masas," *Información Estudiantil* (November 3, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[353] Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta?*, 136.

5.2 Growth, Solidarity and Division: Pro-Independence Student Organizations in the 1970s

By the mid-1970s, differences in strategy and approaches to university reform overshadowed the ideological confluence that pro-independence student organizations had acquired as they struggled against the draft and military education. The Union of Socialist Youths, which aligned with the newly founded Popular Socialist Movement, would be formed as a result of a schism within the Pro-Independence University Youth in 1973 after years of heated debate with the FUPI. These groups would build on Río Piedras' trajectory as a hotbed of pro-independence activism by calling for student-worker unity, reflecting the ideological evolution of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* off campus. While these groups were small in contrast with Río Piedras' larger student population, understanding their ideas and collaborations illuminates the strategies that organizations connected with the *Nueva Lucha* adopted with their young militants and sympathizers over the 1970s.

This section shows how the Río Piedras campus' three largest pro-independence student organizations were bound by student-worker unity discourses by the mid-1970s, even as they disagreed on approaches to national liberation for Puerto Rico. This shared rhetoric allowed them to collaborate both with each other and with other sectors of the university community. Yet the FUPI, the Pro-Independence University Youth and later the Union of Socialist Youths approaches to student-worker unity differed in line with the ways the organizations that they were connected to off-campus engaged with the Puerto Rican labor movement. Indeed, understanding the development of pro-independence student organizing in Río Piedras from 1970-1976 allows us to trace both the growth and the crises of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. These changes affected the ways pro-independence individuals and organizations navigated the University and

their visions regarding the degree to which institutional change was possible within the Río Piedras campus.

The FUPI drew away from its anti-imperialist and anti-electoral rhetoric over the early-1970s, deeming itself the vanguard of Río Piedras' student body as it sought to collaborate with other revolutionary organizations on campus.[354] Still, the FUPI did not frame itself as a Leftist student organization until the MPI transitioned into electoral politics in 1972 and adopted a Marxist-Leninist platform as the Puerto Rican Socialist Party.[355] Though the FUPI sought collaborations with revolutionary organizations, it did not attempt to confront the Puerto Rican state directly. On the contrary, its connection with the Puerto Rican Socialist Party drew it away from clandestine action. The organization first began calling for student-worker unity in the late-1960s and early-1970s, expressing solidarity with industrial workers on strike and other union issues. The FUPI deemed 1971 the "Year of Workers' Organizing", officially campaigning for student-worker unity for the first time. It argued that student-worker unity was crucial for campus activism, as their goals were interconnected. FUPI bulletins spoke of workers as fighting for social vindication and students struggling in favor of university reform.[356] The FUPI, however, did not deem all workers' struggles equal. It participated in a janitorial strike on 1972, but merely commented on a strike held by the University Guard in January of that year, arguing that while guards were exploited workers, their repression against the labor movement on campus was inexcusable.[357]

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[354] "La vanguardia y el estudiantado," *Información Estudiantil* (Janaury 21, 1970). Compilation 14, AUUPR.
[355] "Infantilismo ultra-izquierdista," *Información Estudiantil* (February 4, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[356] "En torno a la represión," *Información Estudiantil* (January 27, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR. "Sobre la jornada obero-estudiantil," *Información Estudiantil* (February 10, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[357] "Continúa huelga guardia universitaria," *Información Estudiantil* (January 21, 1972). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

The FUPI's calls for student-worker unity would connect it with Marxist-Leninist politics, even as former activists who were on campus in the 1970s openly claimed during oral history interviews in 2018 that the organization had Nationalist leanings. Some radicalized high schoolers collaborated organized in favor of independence through the *Federación de Estudiantes Pro-Independencia* (Federation of Pro-Independence Students/FEPI), which would become known as teen branch of the MPI and later Puerto Rican Socialist Party. Pro-independence activists also played a key role in the ousting of the US Navy from the island of Culebra, staging non-violent actions through collaborations with Christian groups and local communities. These actions would be along the lines of the status of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* in the mid-1970s, which saw a stronger emphasis on electoral politics and collaborations with labor unions in what would the Puerto Rican Socialist Party would deem "New Syndicalism."

Over the 1970s, student leaders from FUPI chapters across University of Puerto Rico's feeder campuses arrived in Río Piedras, as did other students with prior experiences in the FEPI. Some of these activists had faced politically motivated criminal charges before reaching Río Piedras, prioritizing pro-independence militancy over their studies. For instance, Julio Muriente, who organized a FUPI chapter in the University of Puerto Rico's Arecibo campus, transferred to Río Piedras and presided its FUPI chapter during the 1972-1973 academic year. Similarly, the Coss brothers, Manuel, José Rafael, and Luis Fernando, were FEPI militants in San Juan's Central High School over the late-1960s before the three of them served in the FUPI's executive board during the mid-1970s. Luis Fernando "Peri" Coss claimed in a 2018 oral history interview that he was denied admission to the Río Piedras campus due to his FEPI militancy, forcing him to begin

his studies in the Humacao campus on the Eastern side of the *isla grande*.[358] This array of experienced activists changed what FUPI militancy meant. Since the organization's founding in 1956, as its members had been bound by standards of academic excellence. In contrast, former *fupistas* who transitioned into the leadership of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party from the early-1970s onward thought that a revolution for a free Puerto Rico was occurring soon – as they underlined in oral history interviews in 2018 – and this shuffled their priorities at the University and off-campus. It was not necessary to perform academically if political duties were to interrupt their studies irremediably. Connections between the FUPI the Puerto Rican Socialist Party grew closer as the Party got ready for the 1976 election, with the FUPI being deemed the Party's "university branch" by political pundits in mainstream newspapers like *El Mundo,* affecting popular perceptions about student activism more broadly. The FUPI participated in the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's campaigns by recruiting poll workers and motivating its sympathizers to vote. These hopes for political transformation would be squashed by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's crushing defeat in the 1976 election, where they only obtained 10,728 votes out of around 1.4 million cast. Regardless of this result, the FUPI continued having a visible presence in the Río Piedras campus, participating in student-worker struggles and calling for university reform as other organizations grew unstable.

For its part, aligned with the Puerto Rican Independence Party, but never officially part of it, the Pro-Independence University Youth remained committed to non-violence over the early-1970s. Its more guarded approach likely responded to the Puerto Rican Independence Party's electoral platform, which did not condone violent action under any circumstances. As the FUPI

[358] Luis Fernando Coss, interview with Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, 2018.

rallied its sympathizers among the student body in favor of university reform during the Fall 1970 semester, the Pro-Independence University Youth in contrast organized a "Summer for the People" for students to do community service and engage with various communities across the archipelago.[359] Prior actions against mining and against the US Navy in the island of Culebra led by organizations aligned with the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* likely inspired this approach to pro-independence organizing. Efforts to engage with off-campus communities also influenced the Pro-Independence University Youth's campaign for university reform, which it named *Universidad Pa'l Pueblo* (University for the People).[360]

The Pro-Independence University Youth also engaged with student-worker unity discourses by expressing itself in solidarity with workers on campus and beyond. It joined FUPI efforts to keep the university cafeteria open and to support janitorial staff on strike in 1971.[361] The Pro-Independence University Youth argued that workers' organizing needed to be politicized, by which they meant, framed explicitly as an example of class struggle against Puerto Rico's capitalist system and US imperialism.[362] While the Pro-Independence University Youth favored student-worker unity, it sought to remain in the margins of the labor movement unless called to action. Its

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[359] "En torno a la concentración del 3 de mayo," *Liberación* (April 21, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "La JIU ante la situación de la universidad," *Liberación* (April 12, 1971). The 1971 Summer for the People included sending students to Culebra to partake in civil disobedience against US Navy exercises done in the island.

[360] "¿Qué será de la Universidad?," *Liberación* (August 17, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Marcha por una Universidad pa'l pueblo," *Liberación* (December 2, 1970). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "La lucha universitaria y sus proyecciones políticas," *Liberación* (January 18, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "La Universidad pa'l pueblo," *Liberación* (February 3, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

[361] "Administración anti-obrera," *Liberación* (January 19, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Queremos abierta la cafeteria," *Liberación* (January 24, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "¡Victoria obero-estudiantil!" *Liberación* (May 12, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Todos a la protesta," *Liberación* (February 7, 1972). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR. "La huelga de los obreros de la UPR," *Liberación* (August 10, 1972). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "La huelga de los obreros de la UPR: Lecciones para el movimiento estudiantil," *Liberación* (August 23, 1972). Compilation 14: AUUPR.

[362] "La administración quiere divider a los obreros," *Liberación* (May 5, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

role, the Pro-Independence University Youth argued, was to encourage students to integrate themselves into a national struggle in favor of independence, which would be achieved through the leadership of elected officials.[363] Along the lines of the Puerto Rican Independence Party's platform in the early 1970s, the Pro-Independence University Youth advocated for a socialist Puerto Rican republic that would combat the archipelago's social and economic ills.

Though not formally part of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, the Pro-Independence University Youth suffered greatly when the party faced electoral defeat and went into crisis in 1972, the same period of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's founding. Gubernatorial candidate Noel Colón Martínez publicly expressed himself against his party's electoral strategies, resulting in his expulsion by the Puerto Rican Independence Party's leadership. This led to a schism labeled *Tercerismo,* in which some members remained loyal to Puerto Rican Independence Party president Rubén Berríos, others favored Colón Martínez, and a third group favored a "third way" that led them to revolutionary organizations or the Puerto Rican Socialist Party.[364] Former Puerto Rican Independence Party member Norma Tapia argued some years after the election that Colón Martínez's expulsion was but the culmination of a longer standing crisis caused by Berríos' despotic leadership and the party's rejection of a truly socialist platform.[365] The Pro-Independence University Youth, which had leaned farther left than the Puerto Rican Independence Party, would formally cut ties with the off-campus collective in the aftermath of a student strike in October 1973.

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[363] "Posición de la JIU ante la unidad obrero-estudiantil," *Liberación* (May 5, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Este año," *Liberación* (August 16, 1971). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[364] Ché Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico,* 219-222.
[365] Norma Iris Tapia, *La crisis del PIP* (San Juan: Editorial Edil, 1980).

The same conflict that led to the Pro-Independence University Youth's separation from the Puerto Rican Independence Party led to the student organization's fracture, as some of its members demanded an anti-electoral and more combative approach to revolutionary politics and Puerto Rico's decolonization. According to Jesús Delgado Burgos, the Popular Socialist Movement, a new albeit small revolutionary organization with an anti-electoral stance appealed to some Pro-Independence University Youth's members during the 1973 strike.[366] The Popular Socialist Movement argued that Puerto Rico lacked a real vanguardist party, adopting Maoist views in favor of a revolution to advance independence and condoning clandestine violence. Delgado Burgos described how some Pro-Independence University Youth activists left after disagreements during the 1973 strike and founded the Union of Socialist Youths. The Pro-Independence University Youth continued existing, becoming the Pro-Independence University Youth-Democratic Organization. The Democratic Organization drew away from student-worker unity rhetoric and mainly focused on campaigns related to university reform, engaging closely with proposals for a new University Law. This group also advocated for the politicization of student councils on campus, which would reframe calls for reform and concern for student affairs along the lines of wider agendas for national political change.[367] It remained at odds with the FUPI and its usage of the university as an activist space.[368] The Democratic Organization's collaboration with the Puerto Rican Independence Party continued until party president Rubén Berríos to publicly dissociated from the organization in 1976 due to its involvement in a workers' strike.

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[366] Jesús Delgado Burgos, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2018.
[367] "Sobre el trabajo de los consejos," *Liberación* (1974). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Sobre la reforma y los medios hacia ella," *Liberación* (November 19, 1974). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Es hora de construir Frente Pro Nueva Ley," *Liberación* (March 31, 1975).
[368] "¿Hacia dónde va el movimiento estudiantil?," *Liberación* (February 27, 1974). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Avancemos por el camino de la lucha… Unidos por la nueva ley," *Liberación* (April 9, 1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "La lucha contra el oportunismo… adelanta la lucha por la nueva ley," *Liberación* (April 23, 1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

The Union of Socialist Youths emerged in the mid-1970s as a syndicalist alternative to the Pro-Independence University Youth, seeking a revolutionary approach to pro-independence struggle with closer collaborations with workers' organizations in Río Piedras, further radicalizing student-worker unity. The collective prioritized the establishment of a workers/communist party by calling for a "true" student-worker unity within a Marxist-Leninist framework. It rejected the ELA and colonial elections, distancing itself from institutional politics altogether. The Union of Socialist Youths shared demands for a new university law and university reform but emphasized the creation of a national student union.[369] While the FUPI also campaigned for this form of archipelago-wide student organizing, the Union of Socialist Youths' class-based analysis emphasized work with student sectors beyond Río Piedras and workers off-campus.

One of the Popular Socialist Movement's leaders was former Pro-Independence University Youth activist Luis Ángel Torres, who was elected to Puerto Rico's House of Representatives under the Puerto Rican Independence Party's ticket in 1972. He abandoned the Party after post-*Tercerismo* disagreements with Berríos and became an independent legislator. Torres was the Pro-Independence University Youth leader that pulled the most weight in the December 1973 schism that led to the founding of the Union of Socialist Youths.[370] The Popular Socialist Movement emphasized organizing workers toward a takeover of the Puerto Rican government. Both the Union of Socialist Youths and the Popular Socialist Movement believed that the ELA was immersed in a crisis due to political and economic bankruptcy.[371] As the Puerto Rican Socialist Party acquired visibility in the 1976 electoral season, the Union of Socialist Youths would

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[369] "La Unión de Juventudes Sociaistas y el presente semestre de lucha," *Bandera Roja* (February 6, 1974). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[370] Alejandro Torres Rivera, quoted in Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico*, 223.
[371] "¿Qué es el MSP?," *Bandera Roja* (August 25, 1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

participate alongside the Popular Socialist Movement, the Socialist League and the Puerto Rican Communist Party in the Revolutionary Anti-Electoral Front, which opposed the participation of pro-independence parties in the 1976 election. The reduced number of advocates for an electoral boycott did not influence the outcome of the election, which actually reflected a 2.2% increase in participation.

By the time of the Union of Socialist Youths founding in late-1973 to early-1974, discourses of crisis were already enmeshed in pro-independence student organizations' rhetoric. The organization blamed the crisis on partisan political intervention, administrative inefficiency and, most importantly, the influence of exploitative capitalist interests in university affairs.[372] The Union of Socialist Youths argued that students ought to struggle against the crisis' causes, rather than its effects, opposing the FUPI's campaigns against the university administration. The Union of Socialist Youths' approach to university issues led to its advocacy in favor of a new university law that would reorganize the university system in its totality, rather than reforming existing structures.[373] It believed that smaller committees made up by students representing diverse political organizations and those who did not engage in any form of political organizing were the key to an effective reform process. The Union of Socialist Youths also called for the expansion of access to higher education across Puerto Rico, emphasizing that of working-class youths. Along those lines, the organization advocated for tuition costs to be adjusted according to family income. The rich, those who benefited from the archipelago's colonial and capitalist systems, ought to have carried

[372] "¡Hacia un cambio de estructuras: Luchemos por la reforma!," *Bandera Roja* (1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[373] "'Tomemos la ofensiva' Profundicemos y organicemos la lucha por una Nueva Ley Universitaria," *Bandera Roja* (February 21, 1974). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

the University of Puerto Rico's financial burdens.[374] This proposal would continue in the Union of Socialist Youths' agenda over the mid to late 1970s, becoming an important student demand during the early stages of a student strike that occurred in 1981 as a result of tuition hikes.

The trajectories of the FUPI, the Pro-Independence University Youth and the Union of Socialist Youths serve as a lens into the development of Puerto Rico's independence movement in the early-to-mid 1970s. Debates over electoral and revolutionary politics, clandestine violence and inter-organizational collaborations permeated into the student organizations aligned with the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Puerto Rican Independence Party, and the Popular Socialist Movement. The growing influence of Marxism-Leninism in the archipelago's independence movement led to the development of agendas that strove for student-worker unity to combat the University's crises. Discourses in solidarity with the labor movement responded to strategies from the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* and were a significant influence in the development of the two strikes occurring at in Río Piedras during the 1970s.

5.3 In Search of Reform: 1973's *Huelga de Octubre*

The 1970s were times of "New Syndicalism" in Puerto Rico. The Popular Democratic Party had made concrete efforts to appease workers' collectives in the 1950s and 1960s, protecting the right to organize in the workplace legally and strengthening protections for employees in both the public and the private sectors. Workers' strikes, however, were becoming more common in the

[374] "Por una universidad abierta y democrática: Luchemos por una nueva ley universitaria," *Bandera Roja* (March 17, 1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "¡No a los arbitrarios aumentos de matrículas!," *Bandera Roja* (May 6, 1976). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "Ante los aumentos de matrículas: movilicemos para protestas," *Bandera Roja* (June 8, 1976). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

early-1970s, with 72 occurring between 1971 and 1973. According to professor and labor activist Miles Eugene Galvin, by 1973, 11.2% of Puerto Rican workers had participated in a strike. This number went up from 2.4% in 1968 and was significantly higher than the percentage of workers who participated in a strike in the US metropole, which was 1.7% in 1973.[375] The New Syndicalism grew ties with the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in particular, which emphasized workers as the vanguard that could both end Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States and lead it toward socialism. New Syndicalist sectors aligned with the Party argued that international labor unions were aligned with bosses, and that they did not prioritize workers' interests. The New Syndicalism also showed Nationalist influences within the Puerto Rican Socialist Party by encouraging Puerto Rican unions to remain independent from international organizations, a sharp break from previous episodes of archipelago-wide labor activism.[376] By cutting ties with international unions, may of which were based in the United States, sectors within New Syndicalism drew on a particular understanding of *puertorriqueñidad* that denied collaboration with or the potential impact of the United States in Puerto Rican liberation. Scholars often position New Syndicalism as part of the history of Puerto Rico's independence movement, emphasizing the breadth of its impact beyond strictly labor-related issues.[377]

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[375] Miles E. Galvin, *The Organized Labor Movement in Puerto Rico* (London: Associated University Presses, 1979), 187.

[376] Puerto Rico's labor movement emphasized connections and solidarity with US-American and international workers' collectives to legitimize its claim for improved working conditions.

[377] For additional insight on New Syndicalism, see Galvin, *The Organized Labor Movement in Puerto Rico*; Raúl Guadalupe De Jesús, *Sindicalismo y lucha política: Apuntes histórico sobre el movimiento obrero puertorriqueño* (San Juan: Editorial Tiempo Nuevo, 2009); Marta Sánchez Olmeda, *Los movimientos independentistas en Puerto Rico y su permeabilidad en la clase obrera* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1991); Juan Ángel SIlén, *Apuntes: Para la historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño* (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1978).

According to founding FUPI member and later university professor Juan Ángel Silén, a student strike that occurred in the Río Piedras campus in 1973 was the only non-worker mobilization that played a crucial role in shaping Puerto Rico's New Syndicalism.[378] But campus protest had not taken that form since the late-1940s, and the return of student striking owed much to student-worker collaborations influenced by the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s shift toward Marxism-Leninism. Indeed, striking was not always normalized in the University of Puerto Rico, or even seen as the best way to pressure the university administration into meeting student demands. In a 2018 interview, former FUPI president Florencio Merced, who led the FUPI during the peak of the ROTC protest period, claimed that the organization "did not strike" during some of its most tumultuous struggles against the university administration and US imperialism in the late-1960s and early-1970s.[379] Instead, the FUPI relied on *paros*, or short work stoppages, to pressure the university leaders into meeting its demands. Yet the two conflicts that stand out in the trajectory of Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations in the mid-1970s are labeled as student strikes, showing the impact of student-worker unity discourses on pro-independence organizations' actions in this period.[380]

The previous instance of student protest known as a "strike" was a struggle in favor of freedom of expression on 1948.[381] A stricter student rulebook and the prohibition of marches and protests on campus led to cooling of student protest throughout the 1950s. Demands for a more participative university over the 1960s and 1970s reflected radicalized students' dissatisfaction not

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[378] Silén, *Apuntes*, 189.
[379] Merced, interview.
[380] Cacimar Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obrero-estudiantil: Las huelgas de 1973 y 1976 en la Universidad de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2014).
[381] Pablo Navarro Rivera, *Universidad de Puerto Rico: De control político a crisis permanente* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2000).

only with institutional administrative structures, but with Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, seen as the culprit restricting true *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy). Off-campus, the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* began leaning Left as it maintained solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, participated in the non-aligned movement, and opposed the Vietnam War and the draft. As factions within the Puerto Rican independence movement studied and implemented Marxist-Leninist ideas during the early and mid-1970s, they began emphasizing workers' organizing as a means of filling its ranks and gaining electoral support. The goal of collaboration with Puerto Rico's labor unions permeated into pro-independence student organizations in the Río Piedras campus, who rallied their militants in favor of student-worker unity. Student activists claimed that their struggle and that of workers was one in the same, as they both struggled against repressive agents of US empire.[382] Students' resorting to striking in similar ways than labor unions across the archipelago epitomized their faith in syndicalist strategies to achieve institutional goals and workers organizing as a means of national liberation for Puerto Rico at large.

This section argues that the 1973 strike served as the first example of long-term student-worker collaboration as the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s emphasis on labor organizing became the main influence in Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations. The FUPI had labeled the previous year as the "Year of Organization", participating in a janitorial strike by spreading garbage across campus.[383] As workers asked for increased compensation and benefits to

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[382] "¡Basta ya de represión! ¡Unidad obrero-estudiantil!" *Información Estudiantil* (February 16, 1972). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

[383] "El año de la organización," *Información Estudiantil* (July 20, 1972). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR. "¡A ensuciar la Universidad: Solidaridad con obreros UPR," *Información Estudiantil* (August 10, 1972). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR. "Finalizó la huelga: Nuestra posición," *Información Estudiantil* (August 24, 1972). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

curb the effects of the economic recession that Puerto Rico began facing in 1973, student activists seized the opportunity to paralyze university operations in support, and to draw new attention to their dissatisfaction with University's structures they considered undemocratic. The 1973 strike, which became known as the *Huelga de Octubre* (October Strike), strengthened ties between pro-independence student collectives and workers in the Río Piedras campus, but also resulted in increased division between student organizations.

During the 1973 Fall semester the Río Piedras campus underwent a period of administrative transitions. The Higher Education Council dismissed university president Amador Cobas, who replaced Jaime Benítez in 1972, supposedly because of poor communication with the Council. Consequently, the chancellors of the four University of Puerto Rico institutional units were compelled to resign from their posts, as they were considered to be political appointments.[384] While opposed to Cobas' administration, pro-independence student activists questioned his firing, blaming the decision on partisan politics just as they had done with Chancellor Díaz González.[385] The institutional instability brought forth by staffing changes, along with the legacies of the ROTC protest period and struggles at the College of the Social Sciences, led to stronger and more radical calls for university reform. Approaches to university reform often shared conceptions of *co-gobierno* (co-government), meaning that students, faculty, and workers would share administrative responsibilities and be active participants in decision-making processes. Student organizations framed their criticisms against Cobas' dismissal around this platform, demanding that their suggestions for a new University president be taken seriously.

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[384] When referring to UPR campuses in the 1970s this piece refers to Río Piedras, Mayaguez, the Medical Science campus and the regional college administration.
[385] "FUPI montará protesta por destituciones UPR," *El Mundo* (October 2, 1973); Pedro L. Rivera, "CES consultará Recinto sobre nuevo presidente," *El Mundo* (October 3, 1973), 1 & 23A.

Amid administrative instability in Fall 1973 the *Hermandad de Empleados Excentos y No-Docentes* (Brotherhood of Exempt and Non-Faculty Workers/HEEND) was involved in negotiations for a new contract, demanding higher wages and increased benefits. Having approved a preventative strike vote, the HEEND reached an agreement with the administration in which its employees would receive a $75 raise and more robust benefits.[386] The university administration was afraid that other university workers would follow the HEEND's lead and request better salaries and working conditions, placing a financial burden on a university supposedly immersed in fiscal crisis. Administrative fears were realized as the University Workers' Union and the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors claimed that the university must have been able to increase their compensation if it had done so for the HEEND.[387] This pressure, along with a reduction of governmental funding for the University, led the administration to rescind their offer to the HEEND, leaving the organization without a clear expectation of what its new contract would entail. This debate between workers, faculty, and administrators made explicit internal divisions within the university community that would render *co-gobierno* difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Still, pro-independence student activists continued calling for more expansive participation in university structures, resorting to more radical actions to achieve their means.

Demanding university reform, students went on strike on October 16, 1973, a mobilization soon joined by HEEND workers searching better working conditions. More specifically, student activists demanded the revision of the 1966 university reform law, student, faculty and worker participation in the selection of the University of Puerto Rico's president and chancellors, a new

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[386] "Empleados UPR dan plazo ir paro," *El Mundo* (October 3, 1973), 1 & 23A. Juan R. Ramos, "Empleados," *El Mundo* (October 4, 1973).
[387] Bartolomé Brignoni, "Matrícula Sindicato Trabajadores UPR da voto de huelga," *El Mundo* (October 11, 1973), 10A. "… complicar situación UPR," *El Mundo* (October 12, 1973), 6A. Bartolomé Brignoni, "Huelga UPR cumple una semana; no se prevé solución a la crisis," *El Mundo* (October 23, 1973), 12B.

student rulebook, and to restrict the University Guard's responsibilities to transit and vigilance.[388] A few days later, student activists added to their list of demands the recognition of the General Student Council as a negotiating body in name of the student body and a general amnesty for striking workers and students to their list of demands.[389] After the administration called for police intervention and cops occupied the Río Piedras campus beginning on October 20, 1973, student activists improvised and turned the Men's Dormitory across the street from Río Piedras' main campus into the strike's headquarters. The HEEND approved an indefinite strike vote across the University of Puerto Rico system, demanding that the administration ratified verbal agreements in a new contract.[390] Pro-ELA governor Rafael Hernández Colón distanced himself from events in Río Piedras, claiming that the government ought not intervene in university affairs to maintain *autonomía universitaria*.[391] This stance differed from the previous annexationist government's open support for right-wing organizing in the University, but was represented in the press as the governor's inability to mitigate youth dissent in a conciliatory manner. Indeed, the Río Piedras campus' mixture of radicalized youths and increasingly combative labor organizations would make it one of the first arenas of resistance against the ELA's recession during the mid-1970s.

Two main factors made the *Huelga de Octubre* different from other mobilizations that previously occurred on campus. It was the first declared student strike since 1948 and the first where the strike vote was indefinite. Given that most university administrators in high positions

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[388] Bartolomé Brignoni & Eurípides Ríos, "Dicen huelga será indefinida," *El Mundo* (October 16, 1973), 1 & 15A.
[389] Luis Angel Torres, "La verdad sobre la crisis universitaria," *El Mundo* (October 26, 1973), 7A.
[390] There were work stoppages in the UPR campuses around the archipelago with the Río Piedras and the Cayey campuses having the most violent confrontations between students, workers and law enforcement. While Cayey decided to extend its strike beyond Río Piedras, its short history fell short to Río Piedras' activist trajectory and location in the archipelago's Metropolitan Area.
[391] A.W. Maldonado, "La UPR y el Partido Popular," *El Mundo* (November 1, 1973), 7A; Tulio Astudillo, "Confía solución sea perdurable," *El Mundo* (November 2, 1973), 1 & 15B; "Responsabiliza Hernández Colón por parlaización UPR," *El Mundo* (November 6, 1973), 14B.

were there in an interim fashion, negotiating with both workers and students fell on the Higher Education Council, the uppermost administrative body in the University of Puerto Rico system. This led to the bulk of the blame being laid by the Puerto Rican press and general public on Higher Education Council president Guillermo Irizarry, who was targeted for his inefficiency in the process of dismissing Cobas, Rivera and the rest of the University of Puerto Rico's chancellors.[392] While Governor Hernández Colón supposedly wanted to keep party politics out of the University, the Higher Education Council's intervention resulted in the management of strike affairs by administrators that were named by the Puerto Rican government without consulting the university community. Secondly, the *Huelga de Octubre* saw innovative strategies emerge from pro-independence student organizations intended to create new forms of participation in processes of resistance. The FUPI, the Pro-Independence University Youth and other student organization created "strike committees" that were tasked with different roles within the strike process, participating in the takeover of university buildings and in educational efforts to educate the Río Piedras community about university reform. This approach to student striking as a learning process for both the student body and Puerto Rican society at large resembled that of Left-leaning sectors of the labor movement, which sought to direct voters toward either the Puerto Rican Socialist Party or the Puerto Rican Independence Party by mobilizing members of public and private sector unions.

As the bulk of Río Piedras' student body abstained from attending classes, smaller groups of students actively opposed the strike, arguing that the bulk of the Río Piedras' student body stayed home because it supported the strike. Rather, anti-strike sectors argued that the majority of Río Piedras students did not want to succumb to pressure and potential harassment from the FUPI

[392] "El presidente del Consejo," *El Mundo* (October 12, 1973), 6A.

and the Pro-Independence University Youth. Anti-strike sectors, which soon unified as the Pro-Student Defense Movement, rejected pro-independence student organizations' attempt to radicalize their peers in favor of Puerto Rican liberation. Still, the Pro-Student Defense Movement deemed striking a legitimate form of resistance in the abstract, but claimed that in this case outside radical agents were controlling the strike's leadership.[393]

Whatever the reason for students' refusal to attend classes during the strike, the shutdown of university operations had the desired effect, pressuring the Higher Education Council into reaching an understanding with the HEEND by November 4, 1973.[394] Workers eventually accepted a $60 raise and other improvements in their benefit package. Pro-independence student organizations, however, decided to continue the strike until the administration met its demands for reform, showing a distinctive focus on student affairs rather than a being concerned solely for university workers.[395] The HEEND's return to work, however, decreased student energies regarding the strike itself, with many returning to classes as soon as the university opened. The student-led sector of the *Huelga de Octubre* finally ended on November 10, 1973, with a public statement where the administration recognized the University of Puerto Rico's institutional crisis and the creation of a Special Commission that would collect and evaluate information to submit to the Higher Education Council for potential amendments to the Student Rulebook and the 1966 University Law.[396]

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[393] Luis A. Cabán, "Grupos estudiantes alegan desconocidos dirigen paro," *El Mundo* (October 19, 1973). 1 & 15A.
[394] Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obrero-estudiantil*, 94.
[395] I. Rodríguez Feliciano, "Estalla bomba en auto," *El Mundo* (November 5, 1973), 1 & 14A; Bartolomé Brignoni, "Empleados UPR trabajarán mañana; estudiantes continuarán en huelga," *El Mundo* (November 7, 1973), 1 & 15A.
[396] I. Rodríguez Feliciano & Bartolomé Brignoni, "Empleados UPR regresan a Recinto sin problema," *El Mundo*, Metro Area Subscription edition (November 8, 1973), 1 & 17A; Juan R. Ramos, "Finaliza paro alumnos Recinto de Río Piedras, *El Mundo* (November 11, 1973), 1 & 13A.

Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations memorialized the *Huelga de Octubre* as a success, even as the University administration did not meet any of their demands. Their early rhetoric regarding the aftermath of the 1973 strike was directly related to the HEEND's successfully getting an increase in salary and benefits. Student activists, however, quickly grew dissatisfied with the Special Commission tasked with advising the university administration for improvements in the University Law and other institutional issues. University of Puerto Rico students already had representation with right to vote at campus-level Academic Senates, the Administrative Board and the University Board.[397] The partial successes of the *Huelga de Octubre* in 1973 masked its effects in Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations. Other pro-independence student organizations harshly criticized the FUPI for its treatment of the strike, as some considered it focused too deeply on the University of Puerto Rico's institutional issues rather than furthering the struggle for Puerto Rican independence and socialism. Meanwhile, the Pro-independence University Youth fractured as its members disagreed on strategy and the organization's relationship to the Puerto Rican Independence Party. The Union of Socialist Youths, which emerged from this schism, would become a key player in student mobilizations in Río Piedras from the mid-1970s until the present. Discourses on student-worker unity would continue at the forefront of bulletins published by pro-independence student organizations as they criticized the university administration and the ELA project over the mid-1970s.

[397] Organización de Profesores Universitarios, "Historia de la participación estudiantil en la UPR," *El Mundo* (October 27, 1973), 7A.

5.4 Facing Austerity: Student Involvement in the 1976 HEEND Strike

In 1975 the word "austerity" began appearing in the literature of pro-independence student organizations. The Pro-Independence University Youth-Democratic Organization argued that austerity repressed the university community, becoming another factor that made a new university law necessary.[398] The Union of Socialist Youths claimed that austerity exacerbated an existing institutional crisis that resulted from the University of Puerto Rico's already antidemocratic character.[399] The observations of these two organizations shed light on broader debates occurring in the Puerto Rican government at-large. The University was one of the public corporations affected by new budgetary measures promoted by the pro-ELA government of Rafael Hernández Colón in response to the effects of the financial recession and high inflation caused by the global energy crisis in Puerto Rico. Following recommendations from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the University of Puerto Rico embarked on an expansion plan in the late-1960s. By the mid-1970s, however, university administrators faced the prospect of managing a larger university with a reduced budget. This institutional instability, along with the Puerto Rico's stagnating economy, led university workers to strike in favor of better wages and working conditions in 1976.

This section shows that the 1976 strike not only represented the most explicit manifestation of student-worker unity in the 1970s, but that it was the first instance of resistance that centralized economic hardship within the context of Puerto Rican public higher education. Rather than frame

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[398] "Todos a la marcha," *Liberación* (February 5, 1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR; "La sección de verano y la austeridad," *Liberación* (February 12, 1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.
[399] "La crisis presupuestaria y las 'medidas de austeridad'," *Bandera Roja* (1975). Compilation 14: Student Affairs, AUUPR.

their arguments around the rejection of US empire or in favor of university reform, pro-independence student organizations argued that improved working conditions in Río Piedras were urgent because the archipelago was in crisis. Some radical voices on campus insisted that all these issues were linked. Writing for pro-independence newspaper *Claridad*, activist professor Francisco Manrique Cabrera argued that the University's crisis was not new, but rather a continuation of an old, generalized crisis that had never been resolved due to Puerto Rico's continued colonial status.[400] In the context of the University in the mid-1970s, however, concern over fiscal crisis began drawing support from students who did not necessarily embrace anti-colonial analysis.

In September 1976 the HEEND again negotiated a contract with the university administration, having forgone a raise in their salaries the previous year due to the University of Puerto Rico's fiscal crisis. Both the HEEND and the Union of University Workers, which represented janitorial staff, approved an indefinite strike vote in mid-September, demanding increased wages and benefits. For the next few days, classes continued normally in Río Piedras, until pro-independence student organizations decided to support a five-day *paro huelgario* (striking stoppage) in an extraordinary student assembly to pressure the administration into negotiating with the workers on strike.[401] University leaders later chose to close the university indefinitely, arguing that property damages caused by activists on strike were too severe to continue normal academic operations.[402] In a column for *El Mundo* newspaper in October, then FUPI leader Luis Fernando "Peri" Coss argued that what was happening in Río Piedras was not a

[400] F. Manrique Cabrera, "Apunte universitario," *Claridad* (September 22, 1976), 14.
[401] "Recinto estuvo paralizado ayer," *El Mundo* (September 14, 1976), 1 & 15A.
[402] "Suspenden otros 19 estudiantes," *El Mundo* (September 16, 1976), 1 & 10A.

student strike, but a "lockout" unilaterally decreed and executed by the university administration.[403]

The institutional response to striking in 1976 was more severe than in 1973, as administrators dealt with a more difficult financial panorama defined by austerity. This time the administration, led by historian Arturo Morales Carrión and long-time higher education bureaucrat Ismael Rodríguez Bou, showed less willingness to negotiate with workers and students on strike. President Morales Carrión argued that the University was unable to meet the workers' demands, claiming that the institution was "broke" without giving specifics on its deficit.[404] Mainstream centrist newspaper *El Mundo* repeatedly reported on stalled negotiations and harshly criticized the administration's unwillingness to meet with workers, considering it one of the main reasons for the university's closing.[405] The administration for its part argued in court that it did not have a worker-boss relationship with the HEEND's employees, stating that the University of Puerto Rico was an educational facility to which workers offered services.[406] This anti-union move occurred in a period of visible mobilization for workers' collectives in Puerto Rico, with both the public and private sectors staging strikes in favor of better contracts.[407] Governor Hernández Colón's distancing from university affairs ended up hurting him in this conflict more than it had done

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[403] Luis Fernando Coss, "Carta abierta a Laguerre," *El Mundo* (October 13, 1976), 6A.
[404] Ramón Rodríguez, "Amenaza de huelga en la UPR," *El Mundo* (September 3, 1976), 5A.
[405] "Vulnerabilidad de la UPR," *El Mundo* (September 24, 1976), 6A. Gloria Alonso, "Estacionaria huelga UPR," *Claridad* (September 27, 1976), 2; Gloria Alonso, "Sin progreso en la UPR," *Claridad* (September 28, 1976), 5; "Hoy se cumplen 27 días comienzo paro UPR; no se visulmbra solución alguna," *El Mundo* (October 4, 1976), 3A; Héctor Meléndez, "'Arrogante y destemplado Morales Carrión'," *Claridad* (October 19, 1976), 2 & 3.
[406] Arturo Morales Carrión, "Morales Carrión analiza la fase laboral Universidad de Puerto Rico," *El Mundo* (September 24, 1976), 11A.
[407] Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obrero-estudiantil,* 59-64, Federico Quiñones Rodríguez, *Sindicalismo y política en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1977).

previously, as his political opponents often cited his lack of action as showing weakness during his 1976 reelection campaign.[408]

The strategies the administration took against workers and students on strike targeted Río Piedras' student population, emphasizing economic factors and access to higher education. Early in the strike, there were accusations of delays in the payment of scholarships to students in need, which the administration blamed on a worker shortage caused by the strike.[409] Students often relied on funds leftover from their Pell Grants and other institutional scholarships to purchase books, food, and housing. When the strike began, *El Mundo* newspaper claimed that a university strike was unreasonable, as low-income students who could not afford private institutions were the most affected.[410] University of Puerto Rico president Arturo Morales Carrión argued that the strike wasted taxpayer money and that it affected businesses and families that made their livings by offering services to the University.[411] This fear-mongering related to finances built on emerging uncertainties caused by the ELA's austerity agendas, which had just begun being implemented in public institutions in Puerto Rico with then-uncertain long-term effects.

Economic arguments against the 1976 strike's also targeted more material dimensions of students' everyday lives. This was the first student conflict in which accusations of vandalism dominated discourses against pro-independence student organizations. Students were destroying property in an institution with limited resources, administrators and political pundits argued,

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[408] Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obero-estudiantil,* 118.
[409] Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Clases UPR transcurren normalmente; 2 uniones mantienen paro Universidad," *El Mundo* (September 8, 1976), 1 & 15A.
[410] "El paro en la UPR," *El Mundo* (September 9, 1976), 6A.
[411] Arturo Morales Carrión, "Morales Carrión: UPR opera bajo inflexible presupuesto," *El Mundo* (September 23, 1976), 10C.

hindering their own ability to study.[412] In addition, the administration also warned about the possible loss of research grants, arguing that shutting down university operations would be perceived negatively by the federal authorities that accredited the University.[413] Along these lines, *El Mundo* newspaper accused student activists of impeding access to research laboratories, risking years of work and university resources. Administrative tactics that sought to curb student and worker dissent during the 1976 strike appealed both to the longevity of the University of Puerto Rico as an institution and the consequences that the long-term shutdown of academic and administrative operations would have on students themselves. These arguments were often directed at students even though it was the HEEND that began the first wave of mobilizations, a move that showed administrative fear of student actions and of the potential impact of pro-independence student activism on the University of Puerto Rico's intellectual and social missions.

On October 11, the university administration reopened the Río Piedras campus despite the HEEND continuing its strike. Given the establishment of picket lines by students and workers, the administration requested police intervention. The press encouraged this measure, arguing that police would be on campus to ensure the safety of those who engaged in academic activities.[414] Chancellor Ismael Rodríguez Bou banned marches, assemblies, and political meetings on campus for thirty days after classes restarted in Río Piedras. Students were forbidden to park on campus or use motorbikes, and had to carry their identification cards at all times.[415] The Puerto Rican police

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[412] "Cierran residencias UPR Río Piedras para reparar daños por huelguistas," *El Mundo* (September 12, 1976), 14C; Bartolomé Brignoni, "No saben fecha reanudar clases," *El Mundo* (September 21, 1976), 1 & 15A; Gloria Alonso, "Cierre indefinido en Río Piedras," *Claridad* (September 16, 1976), 3.
[413] "Pres. UPR: Paro de empleados traería grandes consecuencias," *El Mundo* (September 4, 1976), 3A; A.W. Maldonado, "El ataque a los laboratorios de la UPR," *El Mundo* (September 24, 1976), 7A.
[414] "Reabrir recinto de RP," *El Mundo* (September 17, 1976), 6A; Ramón Rodríguez, "Encuesta: Mayoría de los estudiantes no objetaría policía en la UPR," *El Mundo* (October 2, 1976); 14B. "Malestar Universitario," *El Mundo* (October 17, 1976), 6A.
[415] Charles Beadsley, "Rector prohibe marchas y asambleas en la UPR por un period de 30 días," *El Mundo* (October 12, 1976), 1 & 16A; Héctor Meléndez, "Abren Recinto a macanazos," *Claridad* (October 12, 1976), 3.

interrupted a meeting held by the Pro-Independence University Youth-Democratic Organization the day after the campus reopened.[416] Over the next few days, there were reports of explosives and firearms hidden across the city of Río Piedras, which led to the mainstream press fueling rumors of off-campus intervention in the strike as part of broader discourses against the Puerto Rican Sociality Party, which had its headquarters steps away from campus.[417] Even as workers and the administration reached a tentative understanding on October 19, a confrontation between student activists and police led to the usage of tear gas on law enforcement's part.[418] The severity of these events was likely one of the main factors that pushed both the university administration and workers to accelerate negotiations, finally reaching agreements on October 22, thanks to the mediation of Puerto Rico's College of Lawyers, which had a trajectory of observing and commenting on civil rights in the university.[419]

The 1976 student-worker strike became an important talking point in the gubernatorial race occurring that year. *El Mundo*'s editorial line argued that HEEND activists held steadfast on the strike because of partisan reasons, claiming that the organization wanted Governor Hernández Colón's government to look bad to bolster its president Federico Quiñones' run for the House of Representatives on the Puerto Rican Independence Party's ticket.[420] *El Mundo* also criticized Hernández Colón's lack of intervention and the solidarity that the Puerto Rican Socialist Party expressed in favor of students' and workers' demands. Annexationist politician Orlando Parga

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[416] Charles Beardsley, "Docenas policías campus," *El Mundo* (October 12, 1976), 1 & 16A; Bartolomé Brignoni, "Consejo alumnos de UPR convoca a asamblea hoy," *El Mundo* (October 13, 1976), 1 & 1A.
[417] Tony Santiago & Bartolomé Brignoni, "Aumenta la tension tras serie incidentes," *El Mundo* (October 15, 1976), 1 & 13A; Tony Santiago, "Sigue búsqueda de sospechosos," *El Mundo* (October 18, 1976), 1 & 15A.
[418] Bartolomé Brignoni & Tony Santiago, "Chocan alumnos y policía" *El Mundo* (October 20, 1976), 1 & 10A; Héctor Meléndez, "De nuevo violencia en UPR," *Claridad* (October 20, 1976), 5.
[419] "Sigue mediando Colegio Abogados," *Claridad* (October 18, 1976), 5; Héctor Meléndez, "Terminan negociaciones UPR," *Claridad* (October 22, 1976), 2; Bartolomé Brignoni, "Termina huelga UPR tras firma de los convenios," *El Mundo* (October 23, 1976), 1 & 8A.
[420] "Política en la UPR," *El Mundo* (September 21, 1976), 6A.

Figueroa argued that the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's participation in the election was the main reason why the 1976 strike was not as violent as others in the past, rather than Governor Hernández Colón's leadership. Parga Figueroa claimed that the Governor's lackluster performance drew union leaders toward radicalism and argued that the strike had put the ELA's faults on display.[421] After police reopened the Río Piedras campus, Governor Hernández Colón attempted to mitigate the labor conflict by meeting with Puerto Rican Independence Party and Puerto Rican Socialist Party candidates Rubén Berríos and Juan Mari Brás. Both rejected the invitation, claiming that they would not intervene in university issues out of respect for *autonomía universitaria*.[422] Hernández Colón's management of the 1976 strike was perceived as weak by both annexationist and pro-independence sectors of the Puerto Rican political spectrum, foreshadowing his eventual electoral defeat by his pro-statehood opponent, San Juan mayor Carlos Romero Barceló.

As the 1976 strike ended, Chancellor Rodríguez Bou refused to remove the Puerto Rican police from the Río Piedras campus until everyday activities reached normalcy. Faculty and workers initially opposed reentering campus while it was occupied by police, but later agreed to resume their duties out of fear of losing the 1976 Fall semester. Ultimately, the strike was viewed by its protagonists as a success. Student support for striking workers from the HEEND and the University Workers Union had been crucial to pressure the administration to negotiate. Administrators, on the other hand, claimed victory as well. Morales Carrión and Rodríguez Bou's management of the strike – closing down campus and authorizing police occupation – would become a model for future student conflicts in the Río Piedras campus. Just as the administration

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[421] Orlando Parga Figueroa "'Paz' en la Universidad de Puerto Rico," *El Mundo* (October 3, 1976), 7A.
[422] Bartolomé Brignoni, "Morales Carrión y Lcdo. Miranda se reunirán hoy," *El Mundo* (October 17, 1976), 1 & 17A; Alba Raquel Cabrera, "Berríos y Mari no van a reunion con Gobernador," *El Mundo* (October 18, 1976), 1 & 15A; Antonio R. Gómez, "RHC frustró reunion sobre UPR," *Claridad* (October 18, 1976), 3.

labeled the HEEND and the University Workers Union strike as "illegal" because university workers were supposedly not workers, punitive governance would affect student activism more severely from this point onward. Notably, this enhanced repression would rise in an era when the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* would be in steady decline.

5.5 Conclusion

The end of the ROTC protest period in 1971 fractured pro-independence student organizations in Río Piedras. As organizations disagreed over the usage of confrontation and violence, students sought more institutionalized participation through calls for university reform and a new University Law. Marxist-Leninist rhetoric within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* and calls for student-worker unity led to increasing collaborations between Río Piedras' pro-independence student organizations and organized labor on campus. The most visible result of joint ventures between student and labor activists in Río Piedras were the strikes that occurred in 1973 and 1976. The main difference between the strikes of 1973 and 1976 was their triggers. Pro-independence student organizations led the declaration of a strike demanding university reform in 1973, with workers from the HEEND joining activist efforts to demand that the results of recent negotiations with the administration were actually met. In 1976, however, pro-independence student organizations decided to join a workers' strike in a work stoppage to aid in the shutdown of university operations. The use of striking as a means of resistance would become standard practice for student protesters across the University of Puerto Rico system from the early-1980s onward. Student activists would lead Río Piedras' longest strike – in this case, over tuition hikes – just five years after 1976 HEEND strike.

In October 1976, shortly after university workers concluded their strike, the FUPI celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Even as the FUPI reflected on a trajectory of accomplishments within the university and collaborations with the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* with which it had become integrally linked fell into a period of crisis. November 1976 saw the election of annexationist San Juan mayor Carlos Romero Barceló as governor of Puerto Rico. The outcome of the 1976 election was devastating for the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, which received little over 10,000 votes out of over 1.4 million. Its strategy of building community offices and engaging in outreach with labor unions seemed to have proven ineffective. The Puerto Rican Socialist Party's defeat had significant implications for pro-independence student organizations in Río Piedras. The FUPI went into decay, advocating for university reform as electoral sectors of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* reorganized. The Union of Socialist Youths grew and became more visible as it took over some of the FUPI's leadership of organized pro-independence students. This occurred as student activists and the university community at large faced an increasingly difficult financial scenario for the University of Puerto Rico system.

6.0 Chapter 5 – *Que Hagan la Prueba*: The 1981 Student Strike

Qué cara se ha puesto
la entrada al Alma Mater,
no toman en cuenta
el costo de la vida.
La pobre juventud
ya no podrá estudiar,
los ricos quedarán
dueños de la Universidad.
Admission to the Alma Mater
has gotten too expensive,
they do not take into account
the cost of living.
Our poor youth,
will no longer be able to study,
the rich will now be
owners of the University.

The "student" version of the *Himno de la Vida* (Anthem of Life), the University of Puerto Rico's Alma Mater, became a popular chant of a student strike that occurred on 1981 in its Río Piedras campus.[423] This activist variation of the *Himno de la Vida* speaks directly to the conflict's causes, the Puerto Rican government and the university administration's disregard toward student demands, and the political and economic conditions that were transforming the archipelago's higher education at the time. The 1981 strike was the first triggered by tuition hikes, becoming a violent conflict where the state relied on police intervention to keep the Río Piedras campus open. Student activists responded to police repression with flexibility in demands and strategies as they negotiated with an intransigent administration. This semester-long set of protests questioned existing power dynamics that shaped public higher education and the Puerto Rican state that

[423] Fernando Picó, Milton Pabón & Roberto Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1982), 148.

funded it. Notably, the 1981 strike broke established notions regarding the role that the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* (New Struggle for Independence) played in campus activism in Río Piedras. But perhaps most importantly, student actions and popular reactions to protest in 1981 showed changes in the perceived role of the university in Puerto Rican society. The institution would transition from an institutional pillar of socioeconomic and civic development toward the adoption of a client-driven model where diplomas became a personal investment.

Students who arrived in Río Piedras in the late-1970s and early-1980s had a demographic profile that reflected the ELA's evolution and shortcomings. As purchase power increased, so did private schooling and its impact on K-12 education, reducing the percentage of public school alumni reaching the steadily prestigious University of Puerto Rico. After almost thirty years of ELA economic policies, purchase power also resulted in blurred distinctions between middle and working classes. Visible improvements in infrastructure and the expansion of mass communication and other comforts not only perpetuated support for the ELA but increased the appeal of a closer relationship with the United States. This outlook on life and politics was not universal, however, as poor communities that illegally occupied land, lived in *barriadas,* or settled in public housing were left out of these agendas, sometimes being compelled to migrate to the US metropole. The development of discourses about "statehood for the poor" would also increase support for annexation among marginalized sectors during the late-1970s. The *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* failed to notice these societal shifts, persevering in its Left-leaning cultural-Nationalist rhetoric and attempting to rally youths against the government structures their parents supported.

By the late-1970s, pro-independence student organizations in the Río Piedras campus abandoned the student-worker collaborations encouraged by the Marxist-Leninist platforms

noticeable within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. Pro-independence student collectives began emphasizing university reform as the political panorama looked increasingly bleak due to the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's poor performance in the 1976 election.[424] Electoral defeat did not mean a decrease in governmental surveillance with regards to pro-independence activists, as both pro-ELA and annexationist politicians resorted to punitive governance to subdue discontent with the effects of Puerto Rico's mid-1970s economic recession. Repression intensified for the *Nueva Lucha*'s adherents, epitomized by the assassination of two pro-independence activists in Puerto Rico's Cerro Maravilla on July 25, 1978.[425] Bulletins distributed by the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (Federation of University Students for Independence/FUPI) claimed that the assassinations showed the ascending and dangerous level of institutionalized violence in Puerto Rico.[426] While pro-independence student activists in Río Piedras had historically been a target of government surveillance, repression would be out in the open via continuous police intervention in 1981, even though the strike's leaders did not approach the conflict with a pro-independence slant in their claims.

The 1981 strike, the longest in the history of the Río Piedras campus, was a pivot point in the history of Puerto Rican student organizing. The *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* did not serve as a unifying force for radicalized students on campus as it had done in campaigns against

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[424] The 1976 election brought a general crisis to the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia,* as the Puerto Rican Socialist party received little under 11,000 votes and the Puerto Rican Independence Party acquired just under 6% of the total tally. This led to the decay of the Socialist Party, which had been one of the student movement's stronger allies, as it debated the reasons of its electoral defeat. Ché Paralitici, *Historia de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico: Una lucha por la soberanía e igualdad social bajo el dominio estadounidense* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2017). Héctor Meléndez, *El fracaso del proyecto PSP de la pequeña burguesía puertorriqueña* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1984).

[425] Anne Nelson, *Murder under two flags: The U.S., Puerto Rico, and the Cerro Maravilla cover-up* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1986); Manuel Suárez, *Requiem on Cerro Maravilla: The police murders in Puerto Rico and the U.S. government cover up* (Maplewood, N.J.: Waterfront Press, 1987)

[426] "Maravilla no es un ISSUE, es un HECHO," *Información Estudiantil* (April 1979). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "¿Qué hacemos aquí?," *Información Estudiantil* (August 18, 1980). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

military education and in favor of student-worker unity. The Puerto Rican government and mainstream newspapers *El Mundo* and *El Nuevo Día,* however, claimed that the strike being driven by radical forces off-campus to instill fear and pave way to independence. Yet in fact, as we have seen, activist sectors in Río Piedras had historically seen paralyzing university operations as a last resort to instill pressure on the university administration and prompt institutional reforms, rather than an instrument to bolster political change, which they came to pursue through electoral campaigns. The 1981 strike, however, stood out because students were essentially taking the role of a labor union in paralyzing university operations to force administrators to deal with their demands.

The 1981 strike was memorialized in *Las vallas rotas,* now a classic in literature regarding Puerto Rican student activism. The book was written by faculty members Fernando Picó and Milton Pabón, who were chosen by the Academic Senate in the conflict's early stages to act as mediators in the pursuit of reconciliation between student activists and the university administration. They wrote together with recently expelled strike leader Roberto Alejandro, reflecting on the strike after unprecedented police intervention and the failure to fulfill the conflict's original goal of canceling a tuition hike.[427] The timing of reflections found in *Las vallas rotas,* just a year after the end of the 1981 strike, would end up obscuring some of the factors that made it a pivotal moment in trajectories of student activism in Río Piedras.

Perhaps the most important reason for which the 1981 strike stands out in contrast to previous mobilizations was its failure. Increased support for student activists both on and off campus was not enough to counter government repression and changing popular notions with regards to public higher education in Puerto Rico. As the University of Puerto Rico system grew

[427] Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*.

and private institutions flourished across the big island, the Río Piedras campus' leadership within Puerto Rican higher education and its symbolism as a pillar of institutional development for the Puerto Rican state declined.[428] The annexationist New Progressive Party saw the Río Piedras campus as a dangerous hotbed of pro-independence and Left-wing dissent in the archipelago. Governor Carlos Romero Barceló, elected in 1976, had voiced his disdain toward pro-independence activism and advocated for assimilationist policies that would make Puerto Rico a more desirable territory for US statehood. University leaders named by his administration deemed a tuition hike non-negotiable and followed the strategy their predecessors had pursued during the ROTC protest period as they called for police intervention. A conflict in which student leaders enjoyed broad support in their opposition to increases in tuition costs would be rendered unsuccessful in its effort to cancel or reduce the tuition hike, being relegated to negotiating to limit the administrative and judicial punishment of the students on strike.

In an oral history interview, 2005 strike leader Jorge Farinacci Fernós claimed that there were two ways in which a student strike could end in the University of Puerto Rico context. Firstly, the strike could "deflate", meaning that student energies or organization decreased to the point that the strike lost momentum and could not continue. The second way a strike could finish was "crushed" by the archipelago government.[429] This chapter argues that the syndicalist model of 1981 strike made it prone to being "crushed" by the archipelago government. The decreased influence of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* led to tuition hikes being contested as a purely institutional issue, resulting in the expansion of student struggle and involvement of sectors of the

[428] For more information on the development of private higher education in Puerto Rico see Guillermo Baralt, *Recuerdos del porvenir: La historia del Sistema Universitario Ana G. Mendez* (Cupey: Ana G. Méndez University Press, 2004)l John Will Harris, *Fundación y obra de la Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico: Un recuento histórico* (San Juan: Inter-American University Press, 2012).
[429] Jorge Farinacci Fernós. interview by Aura S. Jirau (via Skype), 2015.

student body that had previously shied away from activism. While the 1981 strike's cause enjoyed broad support, the way in which actions played out allowed the administration to criminalize student protest. The administration's unwillingness to negotiate, enhanced by anti-activist sentiment from the annexationist government, led to students becoming more flexible in their demands and tactics: and losing regardless.

This chapter has four sections. The first section examines the composition of the two main pro-independence student organizations in the Río Piedras campus during the late-1970s and early-1980s. In these years, the FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths, deemphasized anti-imperialist and Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and moved toward a stronger focus on university reform. This was in some ways successful, as when then see the diversification of student activist leadership for the 1981 strike and expanded sympathies off-campus. The second section explores the 1981 strike's exceptionality by focusing on the ways student activists executed a syndicalist approach to protest within a university setting. It argues that the key components of a workers' strike, such as shutdowns, made student activists prone to failing in their struggle against tuition hikes. While blame for the strike dragging on was almost universally put on the university administration, the ways student protesters prevented classes from occurring and relied on student assemblies for decision-making led to decreased support as the strike dragged on.

The third section engages with the 1981 strike's "crushing", via administrative and governmental repression. It shows how the university administration used student leaders' discourses about access to higher education against the strike, allowing the administration to use the state's Judicial Branch to criminalize student activism. Governor Carlos Romero Barceló made public declarations against the strike, a change from his predecessors who sought to frame themselves as supporters of *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy). The fourth section

analyzes student leaders' flexibility in demands and strategies during later stages of the strike, which ended up being about the mitigation of the effects of administrative and governmental repression on student activists themselves. It argues that student leaders' pragmatism was in direct response to government repression as they became more aware that the pressure the strike instilled was insufficient to compel administrators into negotiating. The varied strategies students used within the syndicalist model of striking not only reflected the legacy of pro-independence activism in Río Piedras, but student organizations' increased concern for their peers' wellbeing and the preservation of the right to protest on campus. The conclusion reflects on the ways the 1981 strike diverged from previous mobilizations, setting groundwork for repeated student strikes in Río Piedras during the twenty-first century.

6.1 Assessing Continuities: Pro-Independence Student Activism in Río Piedras from the Late-1970s through the Early-1980s

The successes and difficulties experienced by organizations within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* over the 1970s had a profound impact in the way student organizing played out in the Río Piedras campus. In 1976, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party fell into crisis due to electoral defeat. Out of over 1.7 million votes, the Socialist Party got slightly under 11,000. The FUPI, which collaborated closely with the Party, would feel the crisis' effects and work through them by expanding its campaigns in favor of university reform. As Puerto Rico's *Estado Libre Asociado* (Associated Free State/ELA) faced its first economic recession during the mid to late-1970s, the anti-electoral Union of Socialist Youths, aligned with the small revolutionary Popular Socialist Movement, criticized colonial structures in Puerto Rico through anti-capitalist arguments to rally

students. According to organic intellectual and former Socialist Party member Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, the Union of Socialist Youths succeeded in acquiring leadership of Río Piedras' student activist spectrum during the 1981 strike due to its deemphasizing the status question.[430] But a closer examination of student dynamics during the 1981 strike shows not just one group with a new approach, but a more complicated panorama where new actors that had not been previously connected to the *Nueva Lucha*'s struggles influenced protest in Río Piedras.

This section explains how 1981 strike's strictly institutional issue, increased tuition costs, led to the expansion of student protest in Río Piedras notwithstanding the decline of pro-independence fervor within student organizing. Political Science professor and strike mediator Milton Pabón noted that tuition hikes affected all students, both undergraduate and graduate, regardless of their political affiliation.[431] This led to sectors that were traditionally at the margins of organizations connected to the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* joining the strike's leadership and participating in assemblies and demonstrations. Indeed, collective indignation against the tuition hike led to the longest strike in the history of the Río Piedras campus despite debates between FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths and their distinct approaches to resistance in the University over the late-1970s.

Soon after the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's defeat in the 1976 election, the FUPI went to great lengths to explain why it failed to appeal to Puerto Rican voters. The FUPI claimed that there was a conspiracy between annexationist sectors and the US government to turn Puerto Rico into a

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[430] Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, *El libro, la calle y el fusil: Breve historia del movimiento estudiantil puertorriqueño, Formación de la hegemonía de EEUU en Puerto Rico, y otros ensayos* (San Juan: Ediciones La Sierra, 2018), 172.
[431] Milton Pabón, "La huelga universitaria y la teoría de la conspiración," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas,* 38.

US state.[432] This emphasis on the persecution and repression faced by the Puerto Rican independence movement set the base for the FUPI's criticisms of annexationist governor Carlos Romero Barceló's higher education policies throughout the late-1970s and early-1980s. As the Socialist Party declined, the FUPI toned down its anti-imperialist and Marxist-Leninist rhetoric in favor of more targeted criticisms of partisan institutional policies and administrative changes in the Río Piedras campus. For instance, the FUPI censured the appointment of Ismael Almodóvar as president of the University of Puerto Rico system in its bulletin *Información Estudiantil,* claiming he held anti-student perspectives. Pro-independence students picketed his inauguration at the Tapia Theater in Old San Juan, roughly twenty minutes away from the Río Piedras campus, claiming its costs were excessive.[433] The FUPI's criticisms of the Puerto Rican state turned toward the annexationist administration itself rather than the ELA or other aspects of Puerto Rico's relationship to the United States.[434] In their deemphasizing pro-independence discourses, the FUPI weakened its position as leader of Río Piedras' activist collectives as it coped with its long-standing trajectory at the forefront of student struggles on campus.

While the FUPI declined, the Union of Socialist Youths' observations of Puerto Rico's economy and class dynamics shaped its response to the crises of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. Rather than approaching the 1976 election through conspiracy theories, the Union of Socialist Youths argued that Puerto Rico's colonial status was perpetuated by financial capital.

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[432] "Bienvenidos a estudiar y a luchar," *Información Estudiantil* (February 24, 1977). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs,"AUUPR.
[433] "El nombramiento de Ismael Almodóvar," *Información Estudiantil* (November 21, 1977). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Oportunismo y politiquería en el 75to aniversario," *Información Estudiantil* (March 15, 1978). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[434] "Hagamos frente al Romerato," *Informacion Estudiantil* (September 3, 1980). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Apoyemos trabajadores universitarios," *Información Estudiantil* (April 1979). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Situación delicada en el Recinto," *Información Estudiantil* (October 1, 1980). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

The Union of Socialist Youths also dismissed annexationist discourses regarding the ELA by arguing that Puerto Rico's status was actually working in favor of the economic interests that dominated Puerto Rico, making a change in political status unlikely.[435] Following the Popular Socialist Movement's anti-electoral lines, the Union of Socialist Youths advocated for and electoral boycott of the 1980 election, investing its time in more targeted actions on campus rather than campaigning in favor of pro-independence votes.[436] The Union of Socialist Youths also called for university reform, but it framed its criticisms directly against Puerto Rico's two major parties, explaining that rumors about administrative changes reflected power plays to dominate the university that would only be resolved with a new university law.[437] Through an anti-capitalist approach, the Union of Socialist Youths was able to criticize the ELA's power dynamics within the University without relying on a set agenda for Puerto Rican independence.

The FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths first warned about tuition hikes during the mid to late-1970s as the ELA government adopted its first austerity measures amid economic recession.[438] The FUPI began incorporating tuition hikes into its bulletins more prominently from March 1979 onward, arguing that the measure was triggered by proposed administrative reforms

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[435] "La estadidad para Puerto Rico," *Bandera Roja* (Janauary 17, 1977). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[436] "Elecciones: comentarios críticos," *Bandera Roja* (November 17, 1980). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Nuevo semestre: La colonia en bancarrota," *Bandera Roja* (January 22, 1981). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[437] "La renuncia de Morales Carrión: Otra maniobra politiquera", *Bandera Roja* (July 29, 1977). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Rodríguez Bou se va," *Bandera Roja* (August 5, 1981). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Pretenden actuar solapadamente," *Bandera Roja* (September 20, 1977). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[438] "Nueva estrategia," *Información Estudiantil* (April 22, 1974). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "La crisis presupuestaria y las medidas de austeridad," *Bandera Roja* (1974). "¡Todos a la asamblea general!," *Información Estudiantil* (February 12, 1975). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Canalicemos la indignación," *Información Estudiantil* (May 5, 1976). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "¡No a los arbitrarios aumentos de matrículas!," *Bandera Roja* (May 6, 1976). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Ante el aumento de matrículas, movilicemos para protestas," *Bandera Roja* (June 8, 1976). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

for University of Puerto Rico system. The FUPI deemed increased tuition costs unacceptable to its Río Piedras audience because students had no adequate participation in the decision making processes that would result in that measure, nor in academic affairs more broadly.[439] Though the FUPI mentioned increased costs of living, its criticism of the tuition hike revolved around administrative inefficiency rather than economic or anti-imperialist arguments.[440] Meanwhile, the revolutionary Union of Socialist Youths made calls for the student movement to evaluate, rather than outright reject, an increase in tuition costs. Higher education was more expensive in private institutions and increases in the cost of living made a tuition hike necessary for the University's survival, they agreed. But insisting that a uniform hike would be an incomplete solution the Union of Socialist Youths used its bulletin *Bandra Roja* to continue its mid-1970s advocacy in favor of tuition costs being adjusted to family income, claiming that would be a fairer solution to what it argued was the state subsidizing Puerto Rico's economic elites.[441]

Differences between the FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths were one of the key factors that led to Río Piedras' 1981 strike having substantially different dynamics between student activist sectors. The conflict's spokespeople became known as a collective of strike leaders rather than being labeled according to their organizational affiliation. Then FUPI president José Rivera Santana and Union of Socialist Youths General Secretary Roberto Alejandro were compelled to work together throughout the course of administrative instability and government repression.

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[439] "Aumento en el costo de matrícula$," *Información Estudiantil* (March 27, 1979). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[440] "¿Aumentarán las matrículas?," *Información Estudiantil* (February 6, 1980). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Los universitarios contra el despilfarro," *Información Estudiantil* (January 21, 1981). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "No al aumento en las matrículas," *Información Estudiantil* (February 17, 1981). Compialtion 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR. "Aumento en la matrícula, falsa alternativa," *Información Estudiantil* (March 17, 1981). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.
[441] "Crisis administrativa: Lucha por una nueva ley," *Bandera Roja* (January 28, 1981). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; "Boicot al alza de matrículas," *Bandera Roja* (February 11, 1981). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

Alejandro also presided over Río Piedras' General Student Council and became known as the president of that body rather than as head of the Union of Socialist Youths. This is not to say that pro-independence student organizations did not influence campus protest during the 1981 strike, as *fupistas* and members of the Union of Socialist Youths joined the ranks of the conflict's leadership and influenced the ways demands were made.

The FUPI's historic role as the most visible pro-independence student collective in Río Piedras changed in 1981, as the Union of Socialist Youths became the most visible organization in the strike. This perception emerged from Roberto Alejandro's undisputed role as the strike's main spokesperson and the strike's leaders adopting the Union of Socialist Youths' demand for tuition costs to be adjusted to income as the main proposal to address the University's ills. Alejandro's visibility resulted in his becoming subject of smear campaigns against his personal character in Puerto Rican newspapers by November 1981.[442] In *Las vallas rotas*, Alejandro recalled that the *Comité Contra el Alza* (Committee Against the Hike), a coalitionist collective that united different student sectors in opposition to the hike, was born out of a Union of Socialist Youths initiative intended to expand the demographics of student activism beyond pro-independence collectives.[443] Nonetheless, *Comité Contra el Alza* leader Iván Maldonado framed the organization as an independent organization which the strictly institutional goal of opposing an uniform tuition hike since its origins in March 1981.[444] The *Comité Contra el Alza* soon became the main proponent of tuition costs adjusted to family income, a proposal first introduced by the Union of Socialist Youths, rallying students to oppose the tuition hike regardless of their posture

[442] Pabón, "La huelga universitaria y la teoría de conspiración," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 96.
[443] Alejandro, "Nuevas voces, nuevos cauces: Reflexiones sobre la huelga universitaria," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 131.
[444] Lilliam Marrero, "Crean comité contra aumento matrícula," *Claridad* (March 13-19, 1981), 10.

on Puerto Rico's status. The FUPI, the Union of Socialist Youths and the *Comité Contra el Alza* joined forces and adopted an agenda with strictly institutional demands, using criticisms toward the Puerto Rican state to merely highlight the University's flaws.

New actors became prominent in the strike's activist scenarios as student organizations came together and founded the *Comité Contra el Alza* with the strictly institutional goal of countering the increase in tuition costs. Organizations that had been in Río Piedras for years but shied away from student protest due to its pro-independence bent joined the strike's ranks to oppose tuition hikes. The Autonomist University Youth, connected to the pro-ELA Popular Democratic Party, was present from the beginning of the strike in September 1981. This organization approached student struggle through the courts as the strike dragged on, submitting injunctions against the university administration for their use of police intervention in October 1981.[445] The National Law Student Association used its knowledge of Puerto Rico's Judicial system to protect its peers via the courts as well, with its leader facing institutional discipline for his supporting the strike's leaders from October 1981 onward.[446] The use of Puerto Rico's Judicial Branch to protect student activists and oppose administrative measures reflected pro-ELA students and Law Students' divergence from strategies traditionally used by pro-independence organizations.

Religious student groups also joined the 1981 strike, becoming some of the most vocal and sometimes radical voices against tuition hikes in the University of Puerto Rico system. The

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[445] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Estudinates de la UPR decretan paro de 5 días," *El Mundo* (September 3, 1981) 1 & 11A; United Press International, "Estudiantes marchan hasta La Fortaleza," *El Mundo* (October 10, 1981), 2A.
[446] Víctor González Orta, "Ambos bandos de estudiantes acuden al tribunal," *El Mundo* (October 9, 1981), 3A. Bienvenido Ortiz Otero, "Juez permite abogados presenten pruebas contra la policía y administración UPR," *El Mundo* (November 28, 1981), 3A; Bartolomé Brignoni, "Rector de UPR suspende otros 32 estudiantes," *El Mundo* (Deecmber 1, 1981), 1 & 19A.

Catholic Action Youth, a group dating back to the 1960s, joined the *Comité Contra el Alza*, the Union of Socialist Youths and the FUPI in leading the strike through its president, Eva García. The Catholic Action Youth claimed that Christ motivated them to accomplish an irreplaceable mission of edifying peace within justice.[447] Catholic youths' advocacy and the work of Evangelical students that joined their efforts had impact beyond the Río Piedras campus' gates. By December 1981, both Catholic and Protestant clergy volunteered to mediate between the strike's leaders and the university administration, participating in protests and ecumenical acts.[448] Religious organizations were among the strongest opponents to ending of the 1981 strike, claiming that they could not ignore a single sibling, particularly the poor.[449] The 1981 strike would add diversity to Río Piedras' student activist scenario, but participation beyond pro-independence student organizations would decrease in its aftermath as the FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths resumed campaigns in favor of university reform.

The Puerto Rican Socialist Party's 1976 crisis reshaped pro-independence student activism in the Río Piedras campus. As the FUPI prioritized institutional issues over political commentary in its literature, the Socialist Party enhanced its vanguardist discourse of the role of student activism in the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*.[450] The Union of Socialist Youths, meanwhile, built sophisticated anti-capitalist discourses. Its criticisms of capitalism and its connection to

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[447] "JAC-UPR apoya lucha estudiantil," *Claridad* (November 11-17, 1981), 16.
[448] Rafael Castro Pereda, "Una embajada de paz para la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (October 11, 1981), 6; "El cardenal se ofrece a mediar," *El Nuevo Día* (October 29, 1981), 6;United Press International, "Conferencia Episcopal felicita a Juventud Católica Universitaria," *El Mundo* (December 6, 1981), 15C; Ismael Fernández, "La policía entrará en la UPR para quedarse," *El Nuevo Día* (December 7, 1981), 3; Víctor González Orta, "Rector rechaza la mediación del Cardenal," *El Mundo* (December 7, 1981), 10A; José A. Castrodad, "Protestan los religiosos," *El Nuevo Día* (December 11, 1981), 5; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Rector rehusa tener reunión con religiosos," *El Mundo* (December 11, 1981), 1 & 16A; United Press International, "Religiosos acuden a cita con el Rector… y no encuentran a nadie," *El Mundo* (December 13, 1981), 4A.
[449] Ramón Rodríguez, "Entidades Católicas dan rogativa por solución de huelga," *El Mundo* (December 2, 1981), 10C.
[450] Lilliam Marrero, "Expresión de continuidad de la lucha," *Claridad* (March 14, 1980), 13.

Puerto Rico's relationship to the United States appeared compelling, leading its militants to acquire enhanced visibility within Río Piedras' student activist circles. The 1981 strike would see the Union of Socialist Youths' president leading a diverse set of radicalized collectives that appealed to non-partisan activist sectors off-campus. Christian groups epitomized these relationships, leading to great media exposure to mediation efforts in Río Piedras. But the 1981 strike would have student activists struggling against a concrete institutional policy that was supposed to guarantee not only the University's survival, but the validity of the degrees it conferred.

6.2 A Student-Executed Syndicalist Strike: Fall 1981 in the Río Piedras Campus

The 1981 student strike against tuition hikes in the Río Piedras campus became what historian and Academic Senate mediator Fernando Picó called a "socialist strike in a feudal university." As Picó observed, student activists did not stop the production of material goods or hinder faculty and workers from receiving their salaries.[451] Student-worker struggles during the mid-1970s had set precedent for the use of striking as a means of resistance within the context of the university. Yet in those cases, the presence of labor organizations and their demands had taken the resolution of the conflicts beyond student-administration negotiations. In 1981, however, students decided to paralyze university operations on their own to achieve student-centered goals, going beyond their institutionalized representation to pressure the university administration into canceling an increase in tuition costs.

[451] Picó, "La huelga socialista en la universidad feudal," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 33.

This section analyzes the 1981 as an exceptional conflict and outlines its early stages, exploring how the protests' execution lent itself to be perceived negatively by the university administration and the general Puerto Rican public off-campus. The idea of paralyzing university operations with the intention of protecting access to higher education could be framed as antithetical to the University of Puerto Rico's mission and most students' goals in the pursuit of a degree. Strategies used in workers' struggles, especially those that forced those who did not agree with the strike to halt educational processes, were seen as contradicting student discourses regarding access to higher education. Consequently, they led to decreased support for the strike notwithstanding broad opposition to tuition hikes. This section ultimately argues that the syndicalist character of the 1981 strike actually hindered the chances of success in students' struggles against tuition hikes regardless of the urgency of demands or the process' legitimacy as a means of resistance.

Activist sectors initially had the university community's support during the 1981 strike not only because of the tuition hike as a universalizing cause, but because of broad dissatisfaction with the Río Piedras campus' lack of institutional transparency. There was generalized repudiation for University of Puerto Rico system president Ismael Almodóvar's Integral Development Plan, which sought to redirect funds previously invested in Liberal Arts and pedagogical education toward science and technological fields.[452] The Integral Development Plan called for substantial infrastructure improvements and the expansion of the University's bureaucracy, making increased

[452] The Integral Development Plan argued that Puerto Rican society's necessities had changed due to new industries contributing to the archipelago's economy, raising demand for professional and highly skilled labor. Pro-independence sectors had previously argued that trends along the Integral Development Plan's lines would lead to a "technification" of higher education meant to prevent the development of critical thinking and political education within Puerto Rico's public university.

financial resources necessary for its implementation.[453] The administration made its intentions of raising tuition costs public in May 1981, with the Academic Senate holding public hearings on the proposal over the Summer term. Activist sectors argued that the announcement was too abrupt, and that the results of the public hearings did not represent the university community's input, since the hearings were held at a time of decreased student and faculty presence on campus.[454] Countering what seemed to be abrupt administrative decisions, student activist sectors represented by the General Student Council and the *Comité Contra el Alza* adopted a position initially presented by the Union of Socialist Youths in the mid-1970s in favor of tuition costs adjusted to family income in early-Fall 1981. They also demanded that the Puerto Rican Legislature assign additional funds to the University to mitigate its financial situation, showing awareness of institutional budgetary concerns.

While previous mobilizations set ground for the 1981 strike, this was the first one during which students *cerraron portones* (closed the gates) and paralyzed the Río Piedras campus indefinitely from the start.[455] During the 1973 strike students had sought to do a similar action but were forced to evacuate and settle the strike's headquarters in a residence hall in front of the main campus.[456] Student activists' strategy of preventing classes from taking place and keeping university workers from carrying out in their duties was intended to instill pressure on the administration to negotiate with the General Student Council and the *Comité Contra el Alza*. The administration would potentially fear "losing the semester" because classes were halted, being

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[453] "Plan de Desarrollo Integral" (April, 1979), 26. Box P-3, Compilation 73: Organization and its Functions, AUUPR.
[454] Roberto Alejandro Rivera, "Matrículas: Crónica de un artificio," *Claridad: En Rojo* (August 14-20, 1981), 2-5.
[455] In the context of striking at the University of Puerto Rico, *cerrar portones* refers to the complete shutdown of university operations, both academic and administrative. The phrase refers to activist sectors actively preventing entrance to the Río Piedras campus, which is gated.
[456] Cacimar Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obrero-estudiantil: Las huelgas de 1973 y 1976 en la Universidad de Puerto Rico* (Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2014), 87.

forced to reimburse tuition fees and federal funding it received as a public research institution. Early in the strike, the university administration resorted to canceling classes to prevent protests and student meetings from occurring.[457] This built on administrative strategies used during student-worker struggles in the 1970s, which meant to deemphasize the potential impact of shutting down university operations by arguing that nothing actually stopped. Contrary to administrative rhetoric regarding the necessity to continue the semester communicated to the Puerto Rican public via mainstream news outlets, the university initially became complicit in student effort to paralyze university operations.

Both the strike's leadership and the university administration built cases for their actions protecting the student body's right to acquire higher education of the utmost quality. Student activists argued that the University was already inaccessible to Puerto Rico's poor and working-class youths.[458] In paralyzing university operations, the strike's leaders intended to prevent tuition hikes they argued would make the institution more exclusive as part of an ongoing struggle in favor of a more democratic and transparent university law. Anti-strike sectors made up of administrators, students, faculty, and government officials flipped this assertion, claiming that the conflict prevented the majority of the University's student body from partaking in educational processes and completing their degrees in a timely manner.[459] Increased revenue from the tuition hike would be used to preserve the university's finances and to improve existing services. Rhetoric

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[457] José A. Castrodad, "Cerrada la Universidad hasta el día 14," *El Nuevo Día* (September 5, 1981), 2 & 3.
[458] "Los universitarios contra el despilfarro," Información Estudiantil (January 21, 1981). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR; Lillian Marrero, "Crean comité contra aumento matrícula," *Claridad* (March 13-19, 1981), 10; Luis Fernando Coss, "¿Hacia dónde va nuestra Universidad?," *Claridad* (August 7-13, 1981), 4.
[459] "Reclaman derecho a estudiar," *El Nuevo Día* (September 21, 1981), 4 & 5; Ismael Fernández, "Hoy en la Universidad," *El Nuevo Día* (September 21, 1981), 24; "La administración decarta la presión," *El Nuevo Día* (September 22, 1981), 2; "Gobernador lamenta sucesos," *El Mundo* (November 26, 1981), 1 & 8A; Edison Misla Aldarondo, "El derecho a estudiar," *El Nuevo Día* (December 9, 1981), 36; Ebenezer García Pagán, "La situación universitaria," *El Nuevo Día* (December 10, 1981), 45; Francisco R. González, "Estudiantes a estudiar," *El Mundo* (January 11, 1982), 7A.

against the strike found a smaller yet receptive audience because of longer legacies of anti-Leftist sentiment, enhanced repression toward the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, and to the University's financial ills.

Still, the 1981 strike was the longest in Río Piedras' history, lasting from September 1981 through January 1982. Student discontent with tuition hikes led to the strike maintaining broad student support, with newspapers continuously reporting on substantial absences from classes.[460] The strike dragging on, however, raised concerns about the completion of the 1981 Fall semester across the university community. Administrators fanned these fears through a media campaign that attempted to persuade students to return to their intended position as learners and researchers.[461] In addition, the strike's duration began affecting businesses adjacent to the Río Piedras campus, which relied on the university community for income. Business owners met with university administrators in November to voice their concern over the conflict, encouraging the university's leaders to reach an agreement with the strike's leadership.[462] Semester-long tensions between student activists and administrators had repercussions both on and off-campus, with newspapers across the political spectrum blaming intransigence on the university administration while the university administration blamed the strike's leaders for hindering the student body's ability to complete their semester. While Río Piedras' students went beyond institutionalized processes to pressure the administration with regard to the tuition hike, the strike's leaders did not ignore institutionalized representation for decision-making.

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[460] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "La UPR seguirá abierta con la policía en el campus," *El Mundo* (October 23, 1981), 1 & 8A.
[461] The University financed advertisements in widely read newspapers like *El Nuevo Día* and *El Mundo* with this line of thinking. Puerto Rico's governor also spoke of university events through official televised messages.
[462] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Comerciantes claman por paz en Universidad," *El Mundo* (November 14, 1981), 8A.

Student assemblies became crucial forums for debate during the 1981 strike, with student leaders relying on institutionalized participation both to legitimize support for the struggle and to continue it amid government repression. Río Piedras' students had approved a five-day stoppage via a properly constituted general student assembly on September 2, 1981, with another assembly ratifying an indefinite shutdown on September 21. General Student Council president Roberto Alejandro noted that while going on strike was not his personal choice in combating the tuition hike, he followed the student assembly's mandate.[463] Alejandro broke institutional norms by sharing his responsibilities to preside over assemblies with Iván Maldonado from the *Comité Contra el Alza*.[464] In their desire to make assemblies more participative and treating them as the governing body deciding whether or not the strike should continue, the 1981 strike's leaders redefined how institutionalized student participation played out in the Río Piedras campus.

Yet the effort to insist on institutional processes for legitimization brought complications as well. The Río Piedras campus' Student Rulebook gave the university administration authority to limit the execution of general student assemblies. After an assembly held in September 1981 declared an indefinite strike, administrators refused to authorize another. Yet student leaders convened unauthorized assemblies in late-1981 as the strike dragged on, holding them in the open air on the grounds of the Río Piedras campus instead of the usual venue: the University Theater.[465] Even with difficulties for their execution, attendance to student assemblies continued numbering in the hundreds and ratifying indefinite strike votes through January 1982. It was not until December that a judge overruled the university administration and opened the way for students to hold an authorized General Assembly again. Student assemblies captured the breadth of student

[463] José A. Castrodad, "Decretan un paro en alta voz," *El Nuevo Día* (September 3, 1981), 3.
[464] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Estudiantes seguirán paro," *El Mundo* (September 22, 1981), 1 & 10A.
[465] Manuel Méndez Saavedra, "Ni ley ni orden," *El Mundo* (December 1, 1981), 9A.

opposition to tuition hikes in Río Piedras, but strike leaders' adherence to their decision-making extended the strike and lowered student energies in combating the tuition hike.

Another trait that defined the 1981 strike and delayed its resolution was the importance of mediators in facilitating negotiations between the strike's leaders and the university administration. The administration went back and forth in their desire to parley, sometimes rescinding their invitations to meet with the strike's leaders and reaffirming that the tuition hike was inevitable.[466] History professor Fernando Picó and Political Science professor Milton Pabón were designated by the faculty-led Academic Senate to mediate between the strike's leaders and the tenacious administration. The Academic Senate mediators reached a set of agreements with students by early-November, but university administrators' refusal to accept their compromise led to Pabón and Picó's resignation. As negotiations again stalled in December, Catholic Cardinal Luis Aponte Martínez volunteered to facilitate conversations between the university administration and the strike's leaders, reaffirming an offer he made in October. The university administration, however, turned down Aponte Martínez's offer claiming that the Catholic Church was biased due to the Catholic Action Youth's active participation in the strike.[467] Alejandro later suggested that Antonio Ferré Rangel, the owner of the annexationist *El Nuevo Día* newspaper, as a potential mediator. Alejandro intended to show that willingness to negotiate trumped political affiliation, but Ferré Rangel refused to participate in the conflict's resolution to preserve his journalistic

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[466] Aida Negrón de Montilla, "La crisis universitaria," *El Nuevo Día* (October 6, 1981), 21; José A. Castrodad, "A clase los que pagaron la matrícula," *El Nuevo Día* (October 20, 1981), 3.
[467] "El cardenal se ofrece a mediar," *El Nuevo Día* (October 29, 1981), 6; United Press International, "Conferencia Episcopal felicita a Juventud Católica de la UPR," *El Mundo* (December 6, 1981), 15C; Ismael Fernández, "La policía entrará en la UPR para quedarse," *El Nuevo Día* (December 7, 1981), 3; Víctor González Orta, "Rector rechaza la mediación del Cardenal," *El Mundo* (December 7, 1981), 1 & 10A; "Reacciona el cardenal," *El Nuevo Día* (December 8, 1981), 5; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Rector rehusa tener reunión con religiosos," *El Mundo* (December 11, 1981), 1 & 16A.

objectivity.[468] The mediation of both professors and outsiders intended to resolve the 1981 strike would fall short, undermined by administrative reluctance to adopt agreements and, eventually, by decreased student energies amid government repression.

As the 1981 strike began in September, some student leaders actually admitted that the tuition hike was necessary for the university's wellbeing. Though opposition to the implementation of the hike was almost universal, activist sectors demonstrated an awareness of the impact of increased costs of living and operations faced by the institution and the members of its community. Early in the process, the strike's leaders adopted mid-1970s Union of Socialist Youths' campaigns that advocated for costs to be adjusted to family income in an effort to distribute the financial impact in a fairer way.[469] A report presented in April 1981 by a Multidisciplinary Committee made up of members of Río Piedras' University Board also included tuition costs adjusted to family income as a potential solution to the institution's financial woes, showing more widespread support for the measure across the campus' community.[470] But the university administration rejected "adjusted tuition," as it came to be known throughout the strike, claiming that its implementation was impossible because it would entail the loss of federal funding for the University.[471] Calls for

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[468] Ismael Fernández, "UPR: Proponen que medie Antonio Luis Ferré," *El Nuevo Día* (December 14, 1981), 12; The Associated Press, "Alejandro sugiere Antonio Luis Ferré medie en UPR," *El Mundo* (December 14, 1981), 2A; José A. Castrodad, "Propone comisión conciliadora," *El Nuevo Día* (December 15, 1981), 8; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Autoridades de la UPR no contestan las propuestas de Roberto Alejandro," *El Mundo* (December 15, 1981), 1 & 10A.

[469] "¡No a los arbitrarios aumentos de matrículas!," *Bandera Roja* (May 6, 1976). Compilation 14: "Student Affairs," AUUPR.

[470] Pabón, "La huelga universitaria y la teoría de conspiración," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 43-45; "Comité UPR propone otras alternativas," *Claridad* (April 17-23), 8; Roberto Alejandro, "Matrículas: Crónica de un artificio," *En Rojo* (August 14-20, 1981), 2-5. The University Board is an administrative body at University of Puerto Rico level made up by the university president, the chancellors from all campuses and representatives from each campus' students and faculty members. Though lacking in power, the University Board could be considered the most representative body within the UPR's administrative structures.

[471] The Associated Press, "UPR no aceptará debatir sobre el alza de matrículas," *El Mundo* (September 8, 1981), 4A; José A. Castrodad, "Almodóvar rechaza propuestas estudiantiles," *El Nuevo Día* (September 9, 1981), 5; "No está en 'issue' el aumento uniforme," *El Nuevo Día* (September 9, 1981), 11; José A. Castrodad, "A clase los que

tuition costs to be adjusted to income were constant throughout the strike, reflecting the influence of some student activists radicalized by their allegiance with the Popular Socialist Movement, a revolutionary collective that rejected collaborations with the Puerto Rican state altogether.

After the administration dismissed calls for tuition costs to be adjusted according to family income, student organizations called for a boycott of the first increased payment, due in August 1981. Around 4,000 students initially joined this effort, though it is hard to distinguish between which sectors did so in active rejection of the tuition hikes and the students who were unable to pay due to economic hardship. According to Alejandro, students who did not rely on scholarships to subsidize their studies were the ones who resorted to this means of resistance the most, though students who benefited from financial aid were supportive of the effort.[472] The administration took drastic measures against the boycott and removed students who participated in it from official enrollment lists while ironically denying that they had been "expelled." These students' readmission became one of the strike's main demands, acquiring as much immediacy and support as the struggle against increased tuition costs.[473] The tuition facilitated participation in the struggle against tuition hikes without having to be physically present to protest on campus, its repercussions would also be among the reasons the strike would draw away from its initial struggle against tuition hikes.

Opposition to increased tuition costs and demands for them to be adjusted to income soon became calls for the tuition hike to be reduced or delayed, rather than canceled. As syndicalist strategies failed to pressure the university administration into reaching an agreement with the

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pagaron la matrícula," *El Nuevo Día* (October 20, 1981), 3; Luis A. Cabán, "Autoridades aseguran recinto UPR permanecerá abierto," *El Mundo* (October 21, 1981), 1 & 15A; José A. Castrodad, "La mayoría quería reanudaran las clases," *El Nuevo Día* (November 3, 1981), 2-3.

[472] Alejandro, "Nuevas voces, nuevos cauces," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 128.

[473] Lilliam Marrero, "Más repudio a medidas represivas en UPR," *Claridad* (October 9-15, 1981), 2.

strike's leaders, student activists began relying more on the mediators designated by Río Piedras' Academic Senate to engage in negotiations. By early November 1981, they reached a series of agreements that included an institutional commitment to help students with financial needs and an evaluation of the possibility of setting tuition costs according to income as a possible solution to the University of Puerto Rico's financial woes. These negotiated agreements did not include any cancellation or the reduction of the tuition hike. Instead of making pointed demands regarding tuition costs, by this point student activists were focused on negotiating guaranteed protections for students who had participated in protests, including the dismissal of criminal charges that by then had been brought.[474] Chancellor Miró Montilla quickly rescinded the agreements the negotiators had brokered, arguing that they went against previous decisions made by the Higher Education Council and claiming that students were demanding things beyond the agreement.[475] The strike's leaders, however, still chose to bring them up for approval via student assembly, attempting to create an image of unity among the university community through the use of institutionalized decision making.[476]

The indefinite student strike against tuition hikes in 1981 was a new development in the Río Piedras campus. The extension of the strike exhausted even the most ardent opponents of the tuition hike and the tweaking of institutionalized decision-making processes angered sectors who

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[474] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Consideran amnistías a dirigentes única barrera a fin de paro UPR," *El Mundo* (November 6, 1981), 3A; Luis A. Cabán, "Los estudiantes gestionarán UPR acceda al diálogo," *El Mundo* (November 9, 1981), 1 & 10A.
[475] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Vuelve a suspenderse el diálogo en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (November 11, 1981), 1 & 16A.
[476] José A. Castrodad, "'Acuerdo' hacia la reapertura," *El Nuevo Día* (November 14, 1981), 3; José A. Castrodad, "El 'acuerdo' aún no es definitive," *El Nuevo Día* (November 15, 1981), 6; José A. Castrodad, "Una grave fisura en la Universidad," *El Nuevo Día* (November 15, 1981), 6; José A. Castrodad, "No irán a clases los huelguistas," *El Nuevo Día* (November 17, 1981), 3; José A. Castrodad, "No boicotean las clases en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (November 19, 1981), 2; The Associated Press, "La UPR no acepta asamblea," *El Nuevo Día* (November 20, 1981), 2.

wished to adhere to existing norms. Concluding his contribution to *Las vallas rotas*, Picó argued that "forcing the syndicalist model beyond its capacity in the university was what led to irrational situations" witnessed during the 1981 strike.[477] The student assembly meant to discuss and evaluate Picó and Pabón's agreements would take place on November 25, becoming a violent confrontation that led to activist sectors emphasizing their campaigns against police presence on campus.[478]

6.3 *Mano Dura* on Campus: Administrative and Governmental Repression during the 1981 Student Strike

Bulletins from the FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths dating back to the late 1970s spoke about intensified repression for student activists and the Puerto Rican independence movement at large. Scholar Marisol LeBrón confirms that the Puerto Rican government expanded punitive governance and policing of marginalized communities during this period as the ELA entered its first economic recession. LeBrón argues that punitive governance and policing were meant to contain responses to growing inequalities resulting from economic crisis.[479] The

[477] Picó, "La huelga socialista en la universidad feudal," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 34.
[478] The Police had occupied Río Piedras in October but had been forced to withdraw due to protests. Pro-independence journalist Luis Fernando Coss argued that the Police's immediate withdrawal from the Río Piedras campus became the main point of consensus among the university community. The government used this instance to performatively ponder on whether the Police were actually the agents of violence on campus, knowing that student activists would continue expelling their peers from classes because of the indefinite strike vote that was still in place. Jose A. Castrodad, "La UPR rumbo a la confrontación," *El Nuevo Día* (September 19, 1981), 6; José A. Castrodad, "Con armas se protegerán los salones," *El Nuevo Día* (October 23, 1981), 3; Luis Fernando Coss & Lilliam Marrero, "Firme la protesta estudiantil," *Claridad* (October 23-29, 1981), 16; Ismael Fernández, "A ley de una chispa," *El Nuevo Día* (October 27, 1981), 5; José A. Castrodad, "'Política suicida' a juicio de los huelguistas," *El Nuevo Día* (November 7, 1981), 3.
[479] Marisol LeBrón, *Policing Life and Death: Race, Violence and Resistance in Puerto Rico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

annexationist administration of Carlos Romero Barceló, which lasted two terms from 1976-1984, intensified this repression, with the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* suffering some of its most severe repercussions. Moreover, Puerto Rican Socialist Party tabloid *Claridad* reported in 1977 that COINTELPRO had previously surveilled *fupistas* and members of the *Movimiento Pro-Independencia* (Pro-Independence Movement/MPI), the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's predecessor.[480] The following year, on July 25, 1978, the Cerro Maravilla assassinations instilled fear within the ranks of the *Nueva Lucha.* Punitive governance accentuated by the Romero Barceló administration, fear instilled by the Cerro Maravilla assassinations, and the release of information about previous surveillance all affected student organizing in the Río Piedras campus. And as students went on strike to protest tuition hikes during the 1981 Fall academic semester, university administrators became active participants in state repression of social and political activism.

This section argues that the strategies adopted by student activists during the 1981 strike left the conflict vulnerable to government repression and crushing, manifested through the criminalization of campus protest. Anti-strike rhetoric coming from the executive power became a defining factor in this conflict, as annexationist governor Carlos Romero Barceló took a public stance against protest in Río Piedras by declaring the strike a state issue. Government repression in the university setting manifested itself in two ways: the prosecution of the strike's leadership and through police intervention and occupation of the Río Piedras campus. The university administration deemphasized the institutional processes it traditionally used to discipline student activists, favoring legally-binding policies that could be reinforced by Puerto Rico's Judicial Branch instead. The prosecution of the strike's leaders did not hinder the intensification of student

[480] "FUPI primer objetivo de COINTELPRO," *Claridad* (December 2, 1977), 2; "Hoover orientó primeros operativos contra FUPI y MPI," *Claridad* (December 9, 1977), 2. "Santín colaboró con operativo FBI," *Claridad* (December 9, 1977), 2.

protest, so the administration responded by calling on the Puerto Rican police to occupy the Río Piedras campus to keep its gates open. The criminalization of student activism would affect the way striking played out from that point onward, a stark contrast to prior government discursive emphasis on the preservation of *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy).

The criminalization and policing of student activism in Río Piedras grew out of longstanding anti-Leftist sentiment against pro-independence student organizations. Recordkeeping known as *carpeteo* affected recognized organizations and actors who participated in *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia,* resulting in the sabotage of internal organizational dynamics and the usage of pro-independence actions to tarnish individual reputations.[481] As the 1981 strike began, Secretary of State Carlos Quirós claimed that communist youth with allegiance to Cuba and the Soviet Union were leading protests as part of a scheme intended to create confusion among the population.[482] University administrators and the Puerto Rican press continued speaking to similar stereotypes that referred to pro-independence student organizations as being led by off-campus radicals.[483] In the early stages of the strike, Chancellor Antonio Miró Montilla claimed that some of the students who interrupted classes did so armed, instilling a sense of danger with regards to students on strike.[484] Administrators and annexationist media argued that protest was a student's right, but that activists did not have the right to interrupt their peers in

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[481] *Carpeteo* refers to law enforcement recordkeeping that affected political activists and community organizers in Puerto Rico from the mid-twentieth century to the present. While the FBI tracked some of Puerto Rico's most well-known political leaders in that time, the bulk of *carpeteo* was organized and financed by the Puerto Rican Police.
[482] José A. Castrodad, "Decretan un paro en alta voz," *El Nuevo Día* (September 3, 1981), 3; Luis Fernando Coss, "La Universidad está despierta," *Claridad* (September 4-10, 1981), 6-7; "Quirós acusa a comunistas por 'confusión' UPR," *El Mundo* (September 1, 1981), 1 & 10A.
[483] Rubén Arrieta, "'Pax' para el recinto académico," *El Nuevo Día* (September 24, 1981), 3; Ismael Fernández, "Policía en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (October 12, 1981), 22; Ruth Merino Meléndez, "Dice UPR no deberá rendirse ante minoría,' *El Mundo* (October 17, 1981), 1 & 6A; Rubén Arrieta, "Seguros los pobres en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (October 20, 1981), 2; Ruth Merino Méndez, "Gobernador exhorta a estudiantes a retornar a los salones," *El Mundo* (October 20, 1981), 3A; "Tiempo para enfriar," *El Nuevo Día* (November 9, 1981), 3; José A. Castrodad, "Los huelguistas decretan su receso," *El Nuevo Día* (December 17, 1981), 6.
[484] Carmen Judith Vélez, "Extienden el cierre en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (September 15, 1981), 5.

their pursuit of higher education.[485] Rhetoric about access to the University was traditionally the ambit of pro-independence student organizations, but government officials now used it to argue against the strike's shutdown of university operations.

Puerto Rico's chief of state became one of the most hostile figures toward students on strike in 1981. Carlos Romero Barceló had showed particular interest in university affairs before becoming governor: he had criticized student protest in Río Piedras during the ROTC protest period while serving as mayor of San Juan. Romero Barceló also criticized his predecessor, pro-ELA governor Rafael Hernández Colón, for his poor handling of the 1976 HEEND strike.[486] In 1980, the Puerto Rican electorate reelected Romero Barceló by a slim margin and amid accusations of electoral fraud. He would reject the independence movement more aggressively during that second term and in the aftermath of the Cerro Maravilla assassinations, which he condoned soon after they occurred. Romero Barceló's anti-independence stance showed clearly as he commented on student mobilizations in Río Piedras, criticizing the strike's leadership and claiming that they did not wish to reach a resolution to the conflict for political reasons.[487] Early in the strike Romero Barceló denied the strike leaders' demands for an extraordinary session of the Puerto Rican Legislature so it could assign funds that could prevent the tuition hike, claiming that Puerto Rico did not have additional resources for the University.[488] Romero Barceló's political opposition criticized his public hostility toward student activists. Pro-ELA politicians denounced the

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[485] Ismael Fernández, "Hoy en la Universidad," *El Nuevo Día* (September 21, 1981), 24; "El deseo de la mayoría," *El Mundo* (November 5, 1981), 14A; Jorge Javariz, "Incremento en la fuerza negativa," *El Mundo* (December 2, 1981), 19A.
[486] Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obrero-estudiantil*, 118, .
[487] Rubén Arrieta, "Seguros los pobres en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (October 20, 1981), 2; Rubén Arrieta, "El gobernador toma comando de la crisis," *El Nuevo Día* (November 26, 1981), 10.
[488] Mary Powers, "Aasamblea de estudiantes decidirá el 14 si extienden indefinidamente paro UPR," *El Mundo* (September 5, 1981), 3A; Luis A. Cabán, "Alejandro advierte cierre UPR por un semestre sería aplazar problema," *El Mundo* (September 20, 1981), 3A & 17A; Juan R. Ramos y López, "Apoya decisiones de administración de la Universidad," *El Mundo* (September 24, 1981), 1 & 8A.

Governor for what they argued was his attacking the strike's leaders directly during a televised message regarding the situation in Río Piedras.[489] The Puerto Rican Association of University Professors, which ranged between pro-ELA and pro-independence sympathies, called for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the accrediting body in charge of the University, to investigate whether or not Romero Barceló had intervened inappropriately in negotiations between the strike's leaders and the Higher Education Council.[490] Even though Governor Romero Barceló framed student activists as the culprit of the university's shutdown, he was not an outright enemy of public higher education, supporting administrative measures to end the strike and resume normal academic and administrative operations. Romero Barceló's idea of a university devoid of partisan political activity echoed the earlier notions of the *Casa de Estudios,* and the policies he supported resembled older iterations of the Student Rulebook implemented during Jaime Benítez's chancellorship during the mid-1950s and early-1960s.

University administrators used their institutional power to limit the student right to political activity granted by the General Student Rulebook, echoing policies implemented by Chancellor Jaime Benítez prior to the implementation of the 1966 University Law. Soon after the strike began, Río Piedras Chancellor Antonio Miró Montilla established a moratorium barring student meetings, marches, and demonstrations on campus.[491] Activist sectors argued that the moratorium violated civil rights, curtailing the university community's freedom of expression, association, and protest. Superior Court Judge Peter Ortiz, however, rejected the argument of the moratorium's illegality,

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[489] "¡Basta ya de atropellos y desgobierno!," *Claridad* (November 27-December 3, 1981), 2; Ismael Fernández, "Culpan a CRB por la crisis de la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (October 21, 1981), 5; Carlos Gallisá, "¿Hasta dónde?," *El Nuevo Día* (December 16, 1981), 37.
[490] José A. Castrodad, "El problema universistario es político," *El Nuevo Día* (October 21, 1981), 4; "Romero intervino en la negociación," *El Nuevo Día* (October 31, 1981), 4.
[491] José A. Castrodad,"Deciden usar mano dura en UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (September 18, 1981), 4; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Prohiben marchas y piquetes en la UPR," *El Mundo* (September 18, 1981), 1 & 19A.

asserting that it did not intend to change institutional norms due to its specificity in terms of time and space.[492] Puerto Rico's College of Lawyers shared the university community's rejection of the moratorium, sending observers from its Human Rights Commission to keep track of the police's actions after the administration called for an occupation of the Río Piedras campus in mid-October.[493] Chancellor Miró Montilla, however, leaned in to the legal cover the moratorium provided, repeatedly citing it as the main reason the University pressed charges on student activists and using it to justify police interruption of student meetings on campus. The moratorium expired on December 18, and the Chancellor did not renew it because of the strike's weakened state.[494] The administration's recourse to the off-campus legal apparatus was a new development in 1981. While the *Casa de Estudios* had called for a university to be devoid of partisan politics and activism, the University had not relied on Puerto Rico's Judicial Branch to implement institutional policies barring mobilizations on campus.

The university administration not only resorted to the courts to control the Río Piedras campus, but to discipline students individually. During the 1981 strike the university administration pressed criminal charges against student activists: a sharp break from the tradition of punishment via institutional disciplinary processes. Judge Peter Ortiz was also in charge of evaluating cases for moratorium violations, which soon became legal cases that affected student activists personally. Firstly, the administration sought to bar the entrance of the strike's leaders to

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[492] José A. Castrodad, "En alzada al Supremo," *El Nuevo Día* (September 26, 1981), 5; Víctor González Orta, "Prevén fallo hoy sobre prohibición de actos en UPR," *El Mundo* (September 25, 1981), 4ª; The Associated Press, "Sin lugar interdicto sobre orden Rector UPR," *El Mundo* (September 26, 1981), 6A.
[493] José A. Castrodad, "Disuadidos por la fuerza y por una fuerte lluvia," *El Nuevo Día* (October 23, 1981), 4-5; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "La UPR seguirá abierta con la policía en el campus," *El Mundo* (October 23, 1981), 1 & 8A; Bienvenido Ortiz Otero, "Los estudiantes violan interdicto; entran a la UPR," *El Mundo* (October 27, 1981), 1 & 2A; Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Policía vuelve a desalojar a los estudiantes que protestan," *El Mundo* (October 28, 1981), 1 & 20A.
[494] Víctor González Orta, "Miró Montilla afirma que no renunciará a puesto," *El Mundo* (December 22, 1981), 5A.

the Río Piedras campus. Soon after, the University's lawyers also began pressing criminal charges against students who merely participated in protests that violated the moratorium.[495] The most notorious case was that of strike leaders Roberto Alejandro, José Rivera Santana, Ramón Bosque Pérez and Iván Maldonado, who were arrested and imprisoned for violating injunctions barring them from entering the Río Piedras campus altogether.[496] When they were interviewed, strike leaders claimed that they were well treated in jail, as incarcerated people supported their struggle.[497] While the four strike leaders argued that they were willing to comply with the state's response to their activism, Alejandro, Rivera Santana, Bosque Pérez and Maldonado were more careful with their protesting after this, entering campus less frequently and more cautiously. The university administration broke institutional norms as it resorted to criminalizing student activism, overlooking claims of Río Piedras' *autonomía universitaria*.

Police intervention would end up becoming crucial to keeping the University's gates open as the 1981 strike dragged on. Unlike legal prosecution, which was new, the use of police to curb student dissent in the Río Piedras campus had a long if conflictive trajectory, and activist sectors saw police presence on campus as an act of provocation in of itself.[498] The Puerto Rican police occupied the Río Piedras campus on October 22, the first time during the 1981 strike, after the first set of conversations between strike leaders and university administrators failed to reach an

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[495] The university administration also suspended Professor Arturo Meléndez from the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors and Francisco Jordán from the HEEND. Seeking to decrease support from faculty and workers, the suspensions actually intensified faculty support for the strike and disdain toward the university administration. These suspensions were deemed legal by Judge Carmen Sonia Zayas, who did not see them as violating Meléndez and Jordán's rights as workers.

[496] Bienvenido Ortiz Otero, "Juez también envía otros 3 a la cárcel," *El Mundo* (October 30, 1981), 1 & 12C; Ismael Fernández, "Envían los líderes a la Parada 8," *El Nuevo Día* (October 30, 1981), 3.

[497] "Hablan desde la cárcel… más firmes," *Claridad* (November 6-12, 1981), 2; Luis Sánchez Cappa & Luis A. Cabán, "Hernández Agosto: Dirección UPR cedió el mando a Romero," *El Mundo* (October 31, 1981), 1 & 10A.

[498] Carmen Acevedo Rivera & Luz Dary Serrano Abreo, "La confrontación en el Recinto de Río Piedras (1920-1984)," in Isabel Ramos Rodríguez, Milagros Bravo Vick, Carmen Acevedo Rivera, Luz Dary Serrano Abreo & Diana Rivera Viera, *Lucha y conciliación en la Universidad: Contexto, desarrollo y proyección de la Política de No Confrontación* (San Juan: Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas, 2008), 39-100.

agreement.[499] Both mainstream and pro-independence media reported that both armed guards in uniform and undercover agents patrolled the halls of the Río Piedras campus, preventing small meetings from happening and keeping track of the student activists who interrupted classes. Professors, workers, and the Puerto Rican press condemned the first police occupation, leading to the university administration requesting that police be removed from the Río Piedras campus to begin a "cool-off period" intended to facilitate Academic Senate-mediated negotiations between the university administration and the strike's leaders. Governor Romero Barceló used the police's withdrawal to put the burden of negotiation on activist sectors, claiming that the administration met one of its main demands in requesting the police to leave.[500] The police re-entered Río Piedras a second time in December, again by the administration's request, this time supposedly until "normalcy" returned to everyday life on campus.[501] Historian and strike negotiator Fernando Picó argued that the second occupation was more dissimulated, but in no way less repressive.[502] The second occupation occurred in the aftermath of the most violent event that occurred during the 1981 conflict.

The main example of government repression during the 1981 strike was the police crushing of a student assembly on November 25, 1981. Students had gathered on campus to discuss tentative agreements reached by Academic Senate mediators Fernando Picó and Milton Pabón. The strike's

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[499] "UPR abre hoy con la policía en el campus," *El Mundo* (October 22, 1981), 1 & 9A; José A. Catrodad, "La policía entrará al campus," El Nuevo Día (October 22, 1981), 4; Jose. A. Castrodad, "Con las armas se protegieron los salones," *El Nuevo Día* (October 23, 1981); Lilliam Marrero, "El incumplimiento del CES provoca tranque total en UPR," *Claridad* (October 23-29, 1981), 6-7.

[500] Political Science professor Milton Pabón and History professor and Jesuit clergyman Fernando Picó served as mediators sent by Río Piedras' Academic Senate to find compromise between the strike's leaders and university administration. "Tiempo para enfriar," *El Nuevo Día* (November 9, 1981), 3; Luis A. Cabán, "Romero solicita una moratoria de 2 o 3 días," *El Mundo* (November 9, 1981), 1 & 10A; "Extienden el receso académico," *El Nuevo Día* (November 12, 1981), 5.

[501] Roberto Alejandro, "Nuevas voces, nuevos cauces: Reflexiones sobre la huelga universitaria," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1982), 184.

[502] Picó, "La huelga socialista en la universidad feudal," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 25.

leaders stood on a platform outside the Río Piedras campus' gates to avoid accusations of breaking the moratorium. Little over an hour after the proceedings began, the police complained that cars were blocking traffic in the adjacent street and called for halting the assembly until the vehicles were moved. Former FUPI president José Rivera Santana recalled this event during an oral history interview, remembering that from the platform from which they led the assembly the strike's leaders could see numerous police massing nearby.[503] Observers from the Puerto Rican College of Lawyers were unable to reason with police, who began tear gassing protesters. The confrontation soon turned into a riot where bullets were shot by both police and students. Though there were no casualties, around twenty people were injured from both sides.[504] This event would end up shifting public discourse against both the university administration and the student strategy of continuing the strike. That moment made evident the effects of the criminalization of student activism and police intervention, as voices across the ideological spectrum called for the end of the 1981 strike.

Intense administrative and government repression characterized the 1981 strike, establishing criminalization practices that plague student activism across the University of Puerto Rico system to this day. In using Puerto Rico's justice system instead of institutional processes to discipline student protesters, the university administration delegitimized itself as a governing body, implicitly acknowledging its inability to curb the university community's dissatisfaction via dialog. The government's interest in stopping the strike through whatever means necessary was consistent with annexationist full heavy-handed action against all perceived pro-independence organizing in this era – which included in this case a student mobilization whose focus was neither

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[503] José Rivera Santana, interview by Aura S. Jirau (in person), San Juan, PR, December 2018.
[504] José A. Castrodad, "Faena de tiros y golpes," *El Nuevo Día* (November 26, 1981), 3; Ruth Merino Méndez, "¡Protéjanse por ahí, que están tirando piedras y balas!," *El Mundo* (September 26, 1981), 1 & 8A; Tony Santiago, "Más de 20 policías heridos," *El Mundo* (November 26, 1981), 1 & 9A; "Policía ocupa Río Piedras; alumnos seguirán lucha," *Claridad* (November 27-Decmeber 3), 3.

independence nor geopolitics at all, and whose active participants came from far beyond the traditional loud-but-small pro-independence student groups. The enhanced repression forced the strike's leadership to adopt a more pragmatic approach to activism on campus, appealing to public opinion and leading to the eventual abandonment of the 1981 strike's original purpose: preventing the University of Puerto Rico from increasing tuition costs.

6.4 Changing Demands, Transformed Activism: Student Approaches to Administrative Inflexibility

Writing in *Las vallas rotas,* strike leader Roberto Alejandro highlighted what he saw as a "contradiction" between the strike leadership's flexibility and administrative repression. As the strike dragged on, student activists yielded in some of their demands, aiming to mitigate the effects of striking on Río Piedras' student body. Alejandro argued, however, that the University administration deemed meeting with the strike's leaders and as ceding to activist demands, resulting in reluctance to negotiate to find a solution to the conflict.[505] Alejandro framed student leaders' flexibility as a strength, showing political sophistication and awareness. A closer examination of the 1981 strike's timeline shows that students adapted their demands according to the University administration and the Puerto Rican state's more aggressive repression of protests in Río Piedras. By October, the strike's leadership would end up abandoning the main goal of the

[505] Alejandro, "Nuevas voces, nuevos cauces," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 208-210.

strike – avoiding an increase in tuition costs – in favor of seeking decreased punishment for protesting students and the removal of Police Shock Forces from campus.

This section shows that flexibility in demands and strategies reflected both the strike leaders' pragmatic attitude toward striking as a means of resistance and their inability to counter government repression. Activist sectors sought to appeal to both the entirety of the university community and the Puerto Rican public by representing themselves as rational in their decisions and realistic in their demands. This approach to striking and to students' relationship with institutionalized power deviated from previous episodes of student protest in Río Piedras, which had been so entwined with Puerto Rico's *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*. By 1981, however, pro-independence student activists had toned down their anti-imperialist and Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, adopting more practical approaches as they sought to counter administrative proposals to raise tuition costs. Flexibility allowed pro-independence student organizations to collaborate with other activist sectors on and off-campus and gave the strike a more positive image in the Puerto Rican media, leading to enhanced solidarity from the bulk of Puerto Rican society until the exacerbation of police intervention in November led to widespread rejection of student actions.[506] But student leaders' flexibility in demands and strategies also reflected activist sectors' inability to respond effectively to an increasingly stubborn administration backed by a reactionary archipelago government. An analysis of student activist flexibility throughout the 1981 strike shows an increased emphasis on student wellbeing over commitment to the conflict's established goals.

The first months of the strike saw student activists adopting strategies similar to their counterparts in the labor movement, whose actions sometimes involve preventing strikebreakers

[506] José A. Castrodad, "Cambia la opinion pública sobre la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (September 16, 1981), 5.

from resuming normal operations in their workplace. While the 1981 strike enjoyed ample support among Río Piedras's university community, radicalized participants had to be proactive to prevent classes from taking place, visiting classrooms to talk students and professors into joining ongoing protests.[507] When conversation did not work, some activists became more forceful, coercing their peers and professors into leaving, sometimes using chemicals with foul smells to forcefully evacuate classrooms.[508] Student activists also used loudspeakers to interrupt classes as they marched throughout campus, an action banned by the Student Rulebook. Opposition to these actions led to the establishment of the anti-strike student collective *Comité Pro-Derecho al Estudio* (Committe in Favor of the Right to Study/COPRODE), which neither supported nor opposed the strike publicly.[509] By early November, former Sub-Secretary of State and future Chair of the Río Piedras campus's Department of History Luis E. Agrait argued that the institution was lost in a "labyrinth of irrationality" as student activists reduced their demands but simultaneously escalated their pressure tactics.[510] Higher Education Council president Enrique Irizarry also went on to claim that disguised students interrupted classes in December 1981, accentuating rumors of outside actors intervening in the strike.[511] Activist interruption of classes to continue the strike indefinitely both fed into existing fears of losing the semester and angered sectors that saw the process as antithetical to traditional education processes, paving way for the general public's acceptance of police intervention.

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[507] "Dejen quieta la Univerisdad," *El Mundo* (September 15, 1981), 6A; Carmen Judith Vélez, "Extienden el cierre en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (September 15, 1981), 5.
[508] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "UPR suspende las clases por una semana más," *El Mundo* (September 15, 1981), 1 & 8A; Ismael Fernández, "Es probable que se pierda el semestre," *El Nuevo Día* (November 2, 1981), 5.
[509] Alejandro, "Nuevas voces, nuevos cauces," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas*, 143.
[510] Luis E. Agrait, "UPR: Laberinto de irracionalidad," *El Mundo* (November 9, 1981), 9A.
[511] José A. Castrodad, "Concluirá el año académico," *El Nuevo Día* (December 5, 1981), 4.

November 25's assembly triggered the complete abandonment of the explicit demand to halt or postpone the tuition hike, substituted by three major requests: that students be allowed to enroll if they had not done so, that financial aid be guaranteed for those who needed it, and that the police withdraw from the Río Piedras campus.[512] The events of November 25 led the strike's leaders to accentuate their concerns over safety on campus over their original opposition to the tuition hike, easing the latter demand toward a mere administrative evaluation of its proposal of tuition payments according to income. Even as public criticisms against the administration and police intervention grew, the strike's leaders were unable to rally public opinion in their favor, leading to more creative forms of protest on student activists' part.

Additional examples of the student activist flexibility during the 1981 strike revolved around strategy after November 25's assembly. Some of the strike's leaders built on their own experiences as members of the FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths and brought back strategies from the ROTC protest period. With support from Christian clergy off-campus, the strike's leaders sought to validate striking as a means of resistance via a student referendum in early December 1981. The vote occurred during Río Piedras' second police occupation, but law enforcement did not prevent students from casting their ballots.[513] The referendum sought to reaffirm support for the strike via an electoral exercise that had been formerly used by both student activists and

[512] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Alejandro propone plan pro fin de huelga UPR," *El Mundo* (December 12, 1981), 3A & 9A

[513] The referendum inquired after five issues: first, the strike's continuation; second, demanding that the administration seek additional funding in the Puerto Rican legislature; thirdly, advocating for more student participation via a new university law; fourthly, the elimination of the moratorium and finally, whether to demand Chancellor Miró Montilla's resignation. José A. Castrodad, "Baja asistencia y pocas clases," *El Nuevo Día* (December 1, 1981), 3; José A. Castrodad, "Hoy intentan un referéndum," *El Nuevo Día* (December 2, 1981) 4; "Huelga UPR seguirá en enero," *Claridad* (December 18-23, 1981), 4.

administrators to bolster their agendas.[514] The university administration outright rejected the results of this referendum, which backed the strike's demands and supported its continuation, arguing that its execution had been unauthorized.[515]

Through the referendum, the strike's leadership sought to demonstrate popular support as class attendance gradually grew regardless of police occupation. This would be a manifestation of the phenomenon of *desgaste* (attrition) that affects Puerto Rican student strikes as they drag on, owing to both reduced student energies and an enhanced fear of the potential loss of a semester. According to strike negotiator Milton Pabón, the 1981 strike's *desgaste* was planned by the university administration with the assumption that it would be achieved through the usage of police repression. He argued that the second police occupation in December 1981 was the consolidation of this process, purging the strike of the bulk of its agenda. The administration had already agreed to readmit tuition boycott participants and promised not to pursue additional criminal charges against students. Thus, student activists were left demanding need-based aid for their poorest peers and the removal of police from campus, two proposals divergent from the initial opposition to increased tuition costs.[516] By this point, police were authorized to intervene in Río Piedras whenever there were threats to law and order. Arguably, the student body would come to accept

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[514] Perhaps the most famous referendum in the history of the Río Piedras campus was its student vote regarding military education during the ROTC protest period in March 1970. The administration supported the vote, which ended up demanding ROTC's expulsion from campus and a new university reform but fell short in the student movement's desire to demand then UPR president Jaime Benítez's resignation. The university administration called for another referendum during a student strike on 1973, but activist sectors rejected it because of its method of mail-in ballots. David Rodríguez Graciani, *¿Rebelión o protesta? La lucha estudiantil en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Puerto, 1972); Cacimar Cruz Crespo, *Solidaridad obrero-estudiantil: Las huelgas de 1973 y 1976 en la Universidad de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2014).
[515] Before the strike started a student referendum sponsored by the General Student Council counted with the participation of 33% of the student body, 86% rejected the administrative proposal of a uniform tuition hike and demanded the implementation of tuition costs adjusted to family income. Lilliam Marrero, "Estudiantes rechazan aumento uniforme," *Claridad* (May 15-21, 1981), 10.
[516] Pabón, "La huelga universitaria y la teoría de conspiración," in Picó, Pabón & Alejandro, *Las vallas rotas,* 107-109.

that police would be on campus when classes resumed. In crushing the 1981 strike with police intervention, the university administration would accelerate its *desgaste* and leave student leaders with decreased support and few options to continue their struggle.

By December 1981, the strike's leaders evaluated whether to continue the strike as the traditional Christmas recess approached, attempting to innovate in strategies to maintain momentum. The *Comité Contra el Alza* intended to continue its actions by organizing financial data and propaganda, but there were doubts as to whether occupying an empty campus would be worth activist efforts.[517] Campaigns against student activists had also intensified, with claims of armed students participating in assemblies and the deactivation of a bomb in the Río Piedras campus in early-December.[518] Though no academic term has been canceled due to student actions in the University of Puerto Rico's history, a growing collective desire for normalcy and fear of additional violence drew Río Piedras students back to the classroom. Still, the tuition hike remained unpopular, motivating activist students to rely on the results of the referendum to stage additional actions.

Strike leaders who were not previously connected with the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* adopted a pacifist approach in mid-December 1981 to what was at that point a struggle in favor of financial aid, against the disciplining of student activists, and rejecting police presence on campus. After the referendum, Río Piedras' Catholic Action Youth began a hunger strike. Inspired by Liberation Theology, Catholic students declared a 48-hour hunger strike on December 16 that soon became indefinite in protest of the presence of Police Shock Forces on

[517] "Huelga UPR seguirá en enero," *Claridad* (December 18-23, 1981), 4.
[518] José Rafael Reguero, "Desactivan una bomba en la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (December 4, 1981), 4.

campus.[519] Yet timing led to reduced impact for the action due to low energies on and off-campus, and the upcoming holiday season. Around five students joined the effort as medical professionals refused to monitor those on strike.[520] As the university administration declared an academic and administrative recess for Christmas, student activists ended the hunger strike on December 22, threatening to resume this form of resistance if conditions prone to confrontation between armed law enforcement and protesting students.[521] 1981's hunger strike mirrored the Pro-Independence University Youth's effective usage of that strategy during the ROTC protest period, which had pressured the Academic Senate into accelerating its evaluation of whether military education deserved a place in the University of Puerto Rico. But amid an intransigent administration and a worn-out university community, in 1981 the tactic did not have the effort strike leaders hoped, leading to little improvement in their interaction with the university administration.

The 1981 strike is currently memorialized as one that primarily opposed tuition hikes, but an analysis of activist flexibilities sheds light on the ways the conflict's leaders were unable to counter the impact of state intervention. By the end of the strike, student activists' demands were directly related to the consequences of the conflict itself rather than the initial effort to avoid or delay tuition hikes for the University of Puerto Rico system. Students were unable to prevent the tuition hike or guarantee protections for students who protested. The strike ended on January 19, 1982, having failed to stop the tuition hike or protect the conflict's leaders from prosecution. Rather than admit defeat, the strike's leaders alleged that the outcome showed the inefficiency of

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[519] Río Piedras saw a hunger strike on 1969 protesting ROTC's presence on campus in the midst of anti-war mobilizations in the achipelago and the US metropole. Sponsored by the Pro-Independence University Youth, it responded to the Puerto Rican Independence Party approaches to non-violence inspired by the US civil rights movement. José A. Castrodad, "En estado crítico un huelgusita de la UPR," *El Nuevo Día* (December 18, 1981), 34; "Huelga de hambre en la UPR," *Claridad* (December 18-23, 1981), 5.
[520] Luis Fernando Coss, "Admiten UPR en estado de deterioro avanzado," *Claridad* (December 24-30, 1981), 3.
[521] José A. Castrodad, "Concluye la huelga de hambre," *El Nuevo Día* (December 23, 1981), 6.

the Puerto Rican government and praised the process as one that taught lessons for subsequent struggles in favor of university reform.[522]

Pro-independence student organizations soon returned to their fifteen-year-long campaign in favor of a new university law. Gone was the era of anti-imperialist rhetoric in part of student organizations supported by the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia.* Activists would also stop openly tackling with notions related to the *Casa de Estudios* as the ideal model for Puerto Rican higher education, as subsequent administrations would not necessarily attempt to purge expressions of partisan rhetoric. The 1981 strike launched the early stages of campus protest's distancing from the status question in the University of Puerto Rico context, showing less concern with the political implications of the conflict as a process of resistance against colonialism in the twenty-first century. But the impact of the 1981 strike as a struggle in favor of access to higher education had a long-standing impact in future mobilizations in Río Piedras and throughout University of Puerto Rico campuses across the big island. Notably, student activists now choose to focus on protests' pedagogical legacies and say little about the failure of actions to achieve tangible impacts university policy. University of Puerto Rico student strikes became indefinite by default in the twenty-first century, adopting a rhetoric in favor of increased opportunities for youths as the nation delved deeper into financial crisis.

[522] Luis Sánchez Cappa, "Acuerdan terminar huelga en UPR," *El Mundo* (January 20, 1982), 1 & 14A; José A. Castrodad, "Oficial el fin de la huelga," *El Nuevo Día* (January 21, 1981), 6; "Alumnos lucharán por otros medios," *Claridad* (January 22-28, 1982), 5.

6.5 Conclusion

The 1981 strike at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, became a pivot in the trajectory of student activism at the institution after being crushed by the archipelago government. It symbolized the end of an era of organizing led by pro-independence student organizations and of the *Casa de Estudios* as a guiding principle for public higher education in Puerto Rico.[523] The weakening of the FUPI and the Union of Socialist Youths' role in Río Piedras mirrored crises in the Puerto Rican Socialist Party and other sectors of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* due to internal disagreements and government repression. While both student organizations would continue existing into the twenty-first century, alternative ad hoc student collectives like the non-partisan *Comité Contra el Alza* would continue emerging in subsequent strikes, intending to become spaces of representation broader than pro-independence groups and the institutionalized General Student Council.

The 1981 strike was an exceptional conflict due to student activists building on student-worker struggles of the mid-1970s and adopting a syndicalist model to protest on their own. While the strike was well organized and followed institutionalized processes for its declaration and culmination, administrative actions contributed to the strike dragging on and losing momentum. Broad aversion against the tuition hike could not counter enhanced administrative repression, which had the open support of the archipelago's annexationist executive power. Amid the criminalization of student activism and crushing by Puerto Rican police, the strike's leaders became more flexible in their demands and strategies.

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[523] Silvia Álvarez Curbelo & Carmen I. Raffucci, "Frente a La Torre," in Álvarez Curbelo & Raffucci, *Frente a La Torre: Ensayos del centenario de la Universidad de Puerto Rico,1903-2003* (Río Piedras: Univeristy of Puerto Rico Press, 2005), xvi.

Perhaps the most crucial transformation that the 1981 strike brought forth was that of the priorities of Río Piedras' student organizations, rather than changes in their ideology or strategy. Student activists were more drawn to immediate institutional issues that affected their access to quality higher education, rather than emphasizing broader agendas of university reform or national liberation. Activist sectors that had criticized the administration of former Chancellor Jaime Benítez and his *Casa de Estudios* philosophy early in their trajectories ended up defending Liberal Arts education for its encouragement of critical thinking. The decline of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* not only transformed the ways protest played out in Río Piedras but the political formation of student activists, who ended up focusing on changing existing institutions rather than seeking to collaborate in the pursuit of Puerto Rico's decolonization from the university. This change reflected the *Nueva Lucha*'s own shift to seeking alliances with existing pro-ELA structures with cultural nationalist tendencies. The University, and the struggles within it, would stop mirroring shrinking social struggles off-campus, becoming a bubble of radicalized activists who prioritized their own interests as members of an academic community over struggles in favor of national liberation for Puerto Rico.

7.0 Conclusion

This dissertation analyzed student activism in the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras from 1952 through 1981. This period encompassed the first three decades of the *Estado Libre Asociado* (Associated Free State/ELA) as Puerto Rico's political status in relation with the United States of America. This period would see both a rise in annexationsim (demands for US statehood) and the development of the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* (New Struggle for Independence) as an anti-imperialist and increasingly Left-leaning shift in struggles for Puerto Rican liberation. Actions staged by students during this period would play a crucial role in establishing the reputation of the Río Piedras campus as a hotbed of pro-independence activism. But as argued in this dissertation, campus activism owed much to the growth and diversification of student demographics and shifting perceptions on the ELA as a political model. The Puerto Rican government's investment in higher education led to enhanced socioeconomic mobility for Puerto Rican youths. This development would ironically be both a driver of student mobilization and a force preventing the bulk of Río Piedras' student body from participating in struggles in favor of structural change.

Chapter 1 explored the years 1952-1959, a period of accelerated growth in the University thanks to funding from the ELA government, which turned the University into a pillar of civic and cultural development. Increased enrollments also owed to the GI Bill and military education programming, which added youths from beyond the elite groups that traditionally accessed higher education to Río Piedras' political discussions and lively social scene. The late 1950s also witnessed a revival of pro-independence student organizing via the founding of the *Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia* (Federation of University Students for Independence/FUPI)

after a decade of repression in the aftermath of Nationalist-led protest. Overall, Chapter 1 argued that the diversification of Río Piedras' student body combined with a campus atmosphere that facilitated cultural and political exchanges paved the way for the resurgence of student activism in the late-1950s.

Chapter 2 evaluated Río Piedras' student cultures and struggles in favor of university reform in the early-to-mid 1960s. It argued that discussions on Puerto Rico's status in an increasingly polarized Cold War world radicalized activist sectors in Río Piedras. Analyzing the rhetoric and content of military education programs and unpacking factors shaping pro-independence student organizing and pro-US military students alike, this chapter emphasized the variety of political values and opinions held by members of Río Piedras' academic and administrative communities. As the FUPI became more visible on campus and in the press; faculty, administrators, and students participated in government debates about a new University Law during this period. These discussions related to university reform likewise reflected the multiplicity of perspectives on the role of higher education in Puerto Rican society and of the input of faculty and students in the university's administrative affairs. By the end of the period analyzed in this chapter, a change in university leadership would bring increased tolerance for campus activism, paving the way for more intense and consistent waves of protest.

Chapter 3 discussed an increase in anti-ROTC sentiment and ensuing protest in the Río Piedras campus during the late-1960s. It argued that both geopolitical events and generational shifts within political collectives off-campus had a key influence in the way that struggles related to military education played out. Though pro-independence student collectives had historically rejected ROTC, the Vietnam War and the US-imposed draft led to anti-War sentiment within the broader *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia:* generating new energy and attention that student allies

channeled via campaigns to remove military exercises and courses from campus. But students also organized in favor of military education, reflecting the increased visibility of annexationism in Puerto Rican politics. Conservative students, their families, and their off-campus allies also ramped their own partisan activism, including efforts to remove the reformist chancellor in the Río Piedras campus. The post-1966 administration's tolerance toward anti-ROTC protest was short-lived due to changes in the politization of administrative positions, turning the tide against pro-independence activism on campus and changing the relationship the University and the Puerto Rican government.

Showing how protest and institutional transformations in Río Piedras responded to the ELA's economic hardship in the 1970s, Chapter 4 explored the violent climax of ROTC-related protest in 1970 and 1971, and explained pro-independence student organizations' shift toward collaborations with labor organizations on campus. Pro-independence student groups disagreed on how to continue anti-ROTC struggle, as protests became more violent due to police intervention. The removal of ROTC activities from Río Piedras' main campus grounds in 1971 would be followed by the emergence of student-worker solidarity as a unifying force for pro-independence student organizations with diverging priorities related to university reform and Puerto Rican liberation. Collaborations with an intensifying labor movement paved the way for the activists' eventual turn to striking, or the shutdown of university operations, to pressure administrators to negotiate over labor issues, resource allocation, and eventually push for institutional governance reform. Strikes in 1973 and 1976 showed growing student activist concern with the ELA's limited ability to mitigate economic hardship, which would turn out to be a prelude to a series of student struggles in favor of expanded access to public higher education in Puerto Rico.

Chapter 5 analyzed the long student strike that occurred in Río Piedras during the 1981 Fall semester. It argued that tuition costs served as a unifying force that drew students not traditionally persuaded by activist collectives to support the long-term shutdown of university operations. Pro-independence student organizations had weakened over the late-1970s due to the electoral defeats of political parties they collaborated with and increased government repression emerging from Governor Carlos Romero Barceló's annexationist administration. Consequently, a new generation of student activists responded to administrative and governmental hostility with flexibility – reflecting their weakness, even when student solidarity seemed at an all-time high – shifting demands from the cancellation of a tuition hike to the mere administrative recognition of institutional crises. This strike's crushing by the Puerto Rican government via police intervention ended four decades across which Río Piedras' campus mobilizations where the University had been an important space for national struggles in favor of independence. Moving forward, access to higher education would be the main concern for student activists.

This project's evaluation of student protest in Río Piedras encompassed three dimensions: university-state relations, the impact of the Puerto Rican independence movement on campus activism, and student demographics and activist trajectories. I identified a drastic shift in university-state relations, as the ELA government went from adopting the institution as a pillar of civic and cultural development to showing open disregard for its financial woes and activist sectors. Governmental hostility toward student activism in the Río Piedras campus responded both to the increased visibility of campus mobilizations and the leftward turn some militants of pro-independence student organizations facilitated within the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* more broadly. It also reflected the way that the consolidation of the pursuit of statehood as a goal of one

of Puerto Rico's two parties narrowed the partisan breadth of the ELA's cultural nationalist imaginary.

Off-campus collectives working toward Puerto Rican independence relied on campus activism to radicalize youths, acquire support for electoral and civil disobedience efforts, and recruit leaders for archipelago-wide campaigns. As socioeconomic mobility grew and the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*'s organizational infrastructure became more robust and Left-leaning, student activists gradually lost their reputations as model students in their academic trajectories, and the press increasingly represented them as radical communist agents. Pro-independence organizations, however, understood the limits of the University as an activist space, serving as allies to student struggles in favor of university democratization and reform. The alliance, in other words, functioned as more of a two-way street than existing accounts – from supporters and opponents alike – would suggest.

The Río Piedras campus' student body is constantly evolving due to the nature of higher education itself. New students arrived to campus every year, and across these years in particular they were not simply identical as those who came before. Recognition of these demographic changes is at the center of this dissertation's approach to student activism, which seeks to notice their impact on student radicalization. The number of Río Piedras students grew during the three decades examined in this dissertation, as did the diversity of their socioeconomic profiles. When it came to phases of campus activism, I found that there were student actions that represented the full breadth of Puerto Rico's political spectrum. Though campus actions have historically been described in terms of their connection to the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia*, annexationist student organizing also importantly influenced administrative and state responses to campus conflicts. Meanwhile, though students that opposed to the ELA seeking either independence or

statehood led visible campus demonstrations, most students did not engage in political activism at all, reflecting archipelago Puerto Ricans' support for their fatherland's relationship with the United States.

Acknowledging the underlying impact of enhanced socioeconomic mobility on mid-twentieth century Puerto Rico is key to understanding dynamics shaping campus protest in Río Piedras. The economic growth that occurred during this period was due in large part to the work of government institutions like the University of Puerto Rico. As the Puerto Rican middle class grew over the mid-twentieth century, so did overall conformity with the ELA. The *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* ended up being unsuccessful in convincing the bulk of the archipelago population that ending Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States was preferable to the continuation of its colonial situation. This same fundamental trend affected the course of pro-independence activism in Río Piedras. Nonetheless, constant debates on Puerto Rican politics and culture both in and outside the classroom made the university a more fertile ground than most for the spread of rhetoric and organization of actions framed in support of the archipelago's liberation. Still, the bulk of the student body, like Puerto Rico's population more broadly kept supporting either pro-ELA or annexationist candidates in archipelago elections.

Among the tendencies made clear by this project is the irony that constant exchanges about Puerto Rico's political status do not equate to desperation or urgency to accelerate structural change. Both pro-independence and annexationist student organizing reflected this fact, with their most visible actions revolving around student-centric rather than geopolitical status concerns. By the end of this dissertation's periodization, the bulk of pro-independence organizing revolved around access to higher education and the potential lessons that could come out of student activism itself. Though desire for change in Puerto Rico's status was present in student rhetoric, some pro-

independence organizations' outreach actually became more conservative over time, attempting to become part of colonial electoral structures and aiming to replace the two-party scenario that the *Nueva Lucha por la Independencia* criticized. Once pro-independence student activists transitioned into the leadership of off-campus collectives like the MPI, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Puerto Rican Independence Party or the Popular Socialist Movement, the circumstances that initially drew their radicalization on campus, like economic hardship, had often changed to the degree that the effects of government repression or poverty did not keep them from organizing.

Meanwhile, the alliances that supported student organizing in Río Piedras was also partly responsible for the emergence of stereotypes regarding campus activism. Through collaboration with off-campus pro-independence groups, student collectives had access to resources that allowed them to continue spreading their rhetoric and had opportunities to work if suspended or expelled from the University of Puerto Rico. Low tuition costs also facilitated temporarily abandoning one's studies and resuming them whenever activist trajectories or institutional discipline allowed the completion of degrees. This would lead to the development of the myth of the "eternal student," who was more invested in political organizing than their own studies, supposedly simply using the university as an arena to bolster a pro-independence Leftward turn in Puerto Rican politics. The success of faculty and workers' struggles, which sometimes resulted in scholarships for their children, also fed into this particular stereotype, as their progeny was not as concerned with covering tuition costs as some of their poor and working class peers. The impact of patterns of socioeconomic privilege would become more important in the aftermath of the last student conflict analyzed in this dissertation, as the drive to organize in favor of increased access to higher education directly correlated to existing solidarities with off-campus collectives or the impact of kinship in building activist networks.

As the University of Puerto Rico faces drastic budgetary cuts in the first decades of the twenty-first century, its "student movement" has become increasingly visible and, some argue, impactful. It has staged actions that, while anchored on threats to institutional survival in 2017, like drastic budgets cuts, made national demands like the abolition of Puerto Rico's Financial Oversight and Management Board, better known as the *Junta*. Sectors of both the university community and the broader Puerto Rican population that had been previously critical of student strikes came to support actions in opposition to the federally imposed *Junta* that took over the ELA's finances from the Puerto Rican government in 2016. Students are again bolstering an activist renaissance, transitioning into feminist collectives and projects under the umbrella of *autogestión* (self-reliance or self-management). The University of Puerto Rico is, however, shrinking and becoming more elite as tuition costs rise. In times when the ELA faces major crises and its shortcomings as a colonial status seem increasingly evident to the average Puerto Rican, student demographics and goals in the pursuit of higher education may again play a role determining activist profiles and strategies against US colonialism.

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PERIODICALS

Claridad

El Mundo

El Nuevo Día

La Escalera

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