

## **Mickey Ricans?**

### **The Recent Puerto Rican Diaspora to Florida**

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Paper prepared for the Conference on "Florida's Hispanic Heritage," Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean, University of South Florida, Tampa, October 13-20, 2012.

After World War II, the exodus of Puerto Ricans was primarily directed to New York City and other northeastern cities of the United States. Since the 1960s, however, Puerto Ricans have widely scattered throughout the U.S. mainland. During the 1990s, Florida displaced New Jersey as the second largest concentration of stateside Puerto Ricans, nearly doubling to almost half a million persons. By 2010, the census counted 847,550 residents of Puerto Rican origin in Florida (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a).

The growth of Florida's Puerto Rican population has been spectacular, from slightly more than 2 percent of all U.S. Puerto Ricans in 1960 to more than 18 percent in 2010. Puerto Ricans currently represent the second largest Latino group in Florida, after Cubans, and the most numerous in Central Florida, particularly in the Orlando-Kissimmee metropolitan area. In 2010, one out of five Latinos in Florida was Puerto Rican.

The "Puerto Ricanization" of Florida forms part of the growing diversification of the Latino population in the United States. It also signals the emergence of new ethnic categories among Puerto Rican immigrants beyond "Nuyorican"—the sobriquet used on the Island for Puerto Ricans born or raised in the United States—, such as "Florirican," "Orlando Rican," or even "Diasporican." Journalistic reports have humorously referred to Puerto Ricans in Orlando as "Mickey Ricans" because of their

close association with the Walt Disney World resort (Baribeau 2011). Such hybrid labels point to the significance of local contexts in shaping migrants' cultural identities and in distinguishing them from those based on the Island. At the same time, the differences between Puerto Ricans born on the Island and in the mainland raise emotionally charged issues such as who can claim to be Puerto Rican and how that claim can be legitimated culturally and politically.

The Puerto Rican diaspora in Florida, where Cubans have predominated among Latinos for decades, is fertile ground for rethinking cultural identities in the context of increasingly complex interethnic relations. Above all, it offers a unique opportunity to examine to extent to which a shared Latino affiliation is taking root among immigrants from Latin America. States and cities formerly dominated by a single group of Hispanic origin—such as Puerto Ricans in New York, Cubans in Miami, or Mexicans in Los Angeles—have received a large influx of people from other Latin American and Caribbean countries, such as Dominicans in New York, Nicaraguans in Miami, and Salvadorans in Los Angeles. Thus, each of these sites has experienced an increasing variety in the composition of their Latino populations. The crucial political question is whether the immigrants and their descendants will forge broader alliances with other Latinos, based on their geographic,

historical, linguistic, and cultural affinities; assert their distinctive national origins and transnational connections to their home countries; or perhaps combine the two strategies.

Scholars have explored the growing “Latinization” of inner-city enclaves such as El Barrio (also known as Spanish Harlem) in Manhattan, the Corona section of Queens, the Humboldt Park and Pilsen neighborhoods of Chicago, and Little Havana in Miami (Aranda et al. 2009; Dávila 2004; Dávila and Laó-Montes 2001; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003; Pérez 2004; Price 2007; Ramos-Zayas 2003; Ricourt and Danta 2003; Stepick et al. 2003). In each of these neighborhoods, immigration from various Latin American countries (especially Mexico and the Dominican Republic in El Barrio, and Nicaragua and Colombia in Little Havana) has reconfigured national and transnational identities. Whether immigrants embrace a panethnic affiliation, such as Hispanic and Latino, is still contested terrain.

This essay examines recent Puerto Rican migration to Florida, especially the Orlando, Miami, and Tampa metropolitan areas. It focuses on the immigrants’ settlement patterns, socioeconomic characteristics, racial self-classification, political incorporation, and cultural practices. I argue that the growing dispersal of the Puerto Rican diaspora away from its traditional destinations in the U.S. Northeast and Midwest toward the Southeast and Southwest has long-term consequences

for the migrants' cultural identities, as well as their socioeconomic progress. Puerto Rican communities in Orlando, Miami, and Tampa differ substantially from their counterparts in New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia, not only in their socioeconomic origins and settlement patterns, but also in their modes of economic and political incorporation into the receiving society. The current Puerto Rican experience in Florida is largely unprecedented, especially in comparison with previous migrant waves from the Island to the U.S. mainland.

### **Changing Settlement Patterns**

The geographic distribution of Puerto Ricans in the United States has shifted greatly over the last five decades (see Table 1). Although Puerto Ricans still concentrate in the state of New York, their proportion decreased from nearly three-fourths of the total in 1960 to less than one-fourth in 2010. For the first time ever, the number of persons of Puerto Rican origin in New York declined during the 1990s. Still, New York has the largest number of Puerto Rican residents in the U.S. mainland. Correspondingly, the proportion of Puerto Ricans has increased elsewhere, above all in Florida. Other states with sizeable

increases in their Puerto Rican population included Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Texas.

[Table 1 about here]

Within Florida, Puerto Ricans have settled primarily in three regions. As Table 2 displays, Puerto Ricans cluster in Central Florida, particularly in Orange, Osceola, Polk, and Seminole counties. In 2010, the census counted 291,324 persons of Puerto Rican origin living in those four counties. Although Orange had the largest number of Puerto Rican residents in the state, Osceola had the largest percentage. A secondary concentration is located in South Florida, comprising Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. According to the census, 207,727 Puerto Ricans were living there in 2010. A third Puerto Rican cluster is found around Tampa Bay, which includes Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, and Hernando counties, with 143,886 Puerto Rican residents in 2010. Puerto Ricans are the majority of the Latino population in Osceola and Volusia, as well as the largest Latino group in Orange, Seminole, Hillsborough, and Duval. As one journalist has noted, "the Puerto Ricans settled here [in Central Florida] rather than in South Florida because the latter was so heavily dominated by the

Cuban community. The Puerto Ricans saw an opportunity to establish their identity in Central Florida” (Lipman 2000).

[Table 2 about here]

Florida’s Orange County was by far the leading destination of Puerto Rican migrants during the first decade of the twenty-first century (Figure 1). Moreover, six of the ten main destinations of Puerto Rican migrants (Orange, Miami-Dade, Broward, Hillsborough, Osceola, and Seminole) were located in Florida. Between 2000 and 2009, 18.4 percent of all Puerto Ricans relocating from the Island moved to those counties. Thus, the recent Puerto Rican diaspora has been oriented primarily toward Central and South Florida.

[Figure 1 about here]

Census data also document the restless circulation of people—the *vaivén*—between Puerto Rico and the United States, which I have analyzed elsewhere (Duany 2002). Many more Puerto Ricans are moving away from the Bronx and other traditional destinations (such as New York and Kings counties in New York and Cook county in Illinois, not shown in the figure) than from most places in Florida. Hence, not only are more Puerto Ricans

leaving the Island for Florida than other states, but more Puerto Ricans are leaving those states and returning to the Island.

Florida now has three of the top ten leading metropolitan areas in the United States with Puerto Rican populations: Orlando-Kissimmee, Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, and Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater (Table 3). In 2010, Orlando had the second largest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the United States after New York City. Moreover, Puerto Ricans are the largest Latino group in Orlando and Tampa, and the second largest in Miami and Ft. Lauderdale (after Cubans). In Orlando, almost 13 percent of all residents are Puerto Rican, a higher share of the total population than in New York City (about 6 percent). As Tony Suárez, the second Puerto Rican elected to Florida's state legislature, quipped, "What Miami is to Cubans, Orlando soon will be to Puerto Ricans" (Friedman 2001). Since the 1990s, Orlando has become the new Puerto Rican "Mecca."

[Table 3 about here]

The Orlando-Kissimmee metropolitan area has four major Puerto Rican enclaves (Archer and Bezdecny 2009; Concepción Torres 2008; Sánchez 2009). The main points of residential



agglomeration of Puerto Ricans are in the eastern section of the city of Orlando, the south central area of the city, Kissimmee (in Osceola County), and Poinciana (in Polk County). In 2010, Buenaventura Lakes in Osceola County, with 11,618 Puerto Rican residents, was the largest Puerto Rican neighborhood in Central Florida. The nearby Meadow Woods development in Orange County, with 8,974 Puerto Rican residents, was the second largest (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a). Such geographic concentrations are primarily suburban housing subdivisions with extremely high densities of Puerto Rican residents, ranging from 35 to 45 percent of all residents. The causes and consequences of residential segregation among Puerto Ricans in Central Florida have attracted increasing attention (see Vargas-Ramos 2006; Vélez and Burgos 2010; Villarrubia-Mendoza 2007, 2010). Nonetheless, the physical and socioeconomic features of many Puerto Rican settlements in Florida, typical of middle-class suburban neighborhoods, depart from the inner-city barrios of New York and other northeastern states.

In short, much of the Puerto Rican population is on the move, both within the U.S. mainland and on the Island. As Florida has become the second most important location of stateside Puerto Ricans, several cities, notably Orlando, Miami, Tampa, and Ft. Lauderdale, have emerged as primary destinations for Puerto Rican migrants. Moreover, Puerto Ricans in Florida

are highly concentrated in several counties, such as Orange, Osceola, Miami-Dade, Broward, and Hillsborough, and in some localities within those counties, such as Kissimmee in Osceola. The social, economic, political, and cultural causes and effects of such extreme geographic concentration have been documented among other Latino groups in the United States (see Price et al. 2011).

### **Socioeconomic Profile**

The existing literature on the socioeconomic background of Puerto Rican migrants to Florida provides a mixed portrait of this population. Journalistic reports and census data suggest that many professionals and managers have relocated from the Island to Miami, Tampa, and Orlando. The Puerto Rican press has highlighted the “brain drain” of physicians, nurses, teachers, and engineers over the last few decades (Oliver-Méndez 2002; Pascual Amadeo 1994; Rivera Vargas 2008). Various reporters, planners, and scholars have depicted Puerto Ricans in Florida as predominantly middle class, college-educated, and suburban (Friedman 2002; Olmeda 1998; Rivera-Batiz and Santiago 1994, 1996). The 2010 census found that the median household income for Puerto Ricans in the Orlando-Kissimmee metropolitan area was \$37,561. More than half (53 percent) of Puerto Rican workers in

the area were white-collar workers such as salespersons and managers. Fifteen percent were college graduates (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a). As journalist Robert Friedman (2002: 6) summed it up, "Puerto Ricans who have settled in and around the Orlando area are relatively well-off economically and have a higher educational level and a more thriving business community than earlier generations of Boricuas [Puerto Ricans] who settled mostly in the U.S. Northeast."

[Table 4 about here]

According to another journalist, "the first wave of Puerto Ricans to settle here [in the Orlando area] were largely retirees attracted to the quiet, safer lifestyle portrayed in Central Florida at a time when the Island, and particularly San Juan, was experiencing a sharp increase in crime" (Lipman 2000). Studies conducted by the Puerto Rico Planning Board confirm that many people move from the Island for a host of non-economic reasons, such as reuniting with family members and searching for a better quality of life, rather than simply finding a job or improving their salaries. This is particularly true for Island-born professionals who tend to relocate in Florida, California, and Texas (Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico 2000; Olmeda 1998). In the early 1990s, for example, more than 40 percent of

all graduates from medical schools in Puerto Rico were living in the United States; 18 percent of these were in Florida (Pascual Amadeo 1994).

Another index of the migrants' class selectivity is the growing number of Puerto Rican-owned businesses in South and Central Florida. In 2007, Puerto Ricans owned 16,948 businesses in Miami-Dade County and 7,488 in the Orlando-Deltona-Daytona Beach area. Most firms were in administrative and support services, professional services, transportation and warehousing, construction, retail trade, real estate, health care and social assistance, and other services (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a). Puerto Ricans dominate the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando, with more than 300 members in 2001 (Friedman 2002; Pacheco 2001b). This economic boom has attracted Island-based businesses to Central Florida, such as the Ana G. Méndez Educational Foundation, Banco Popular de Puerto Rico, Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples, Empresas Fonalledas, Goya Foods, Martín's BBQ restaurant, *El Nuevo Día*, Plaza Gigante, Puerto Rican American Insurance Company (PRAICO), and R & G Crown (Fonseca 2004).

A 2001 survey of the members of PROFESA, the Puerto Rican Professional Association of South Florida, throws light on the socioeconomic profile of middle-class migrants in Miami (PROFESA 2001). At the time, two-thirds of the members were relatively

young (between 25 and 44 years of age) and a similar proportion was born on the Island. On average, they had lived 19 years in Puerto Rico and 17 in the mainland. They had a high educational level—33 percent had completed master's degrees. More than half earned more than \$80,000 a year. Slightly more than one-fourth were professionals, especially accountants, attorneys, and physicians, and another fourth were executives, managers, and business owners. About a third was married to non-Puerto Ricans, especially Americans and Cubans. Eighty-four percent of the respondents spoke both Spanish and English at home. Eighty-seven percent traveled more than once a year to the Island. Although the survey was limited to a single voluntary association, its results suggest a highly mobile, bilingual, well-educated, and prosperous elite among Puerto Ricans in South Florida.

Nevertheless, many Puerto Rican migrants are service and blue-collar workers. Thousands toil at Orlando's tourist attractions such as Walt Disney World, which actively recruits recent graduates and students from the University of Puerto Rico (Hernández Cruz 2002). The majority of the recruits are young persons looking for jobs and higher salaries abroad. Puerto Rican migration to Florida also draws on a large pool of disgruntled residents of the northern "Rust Belt" attracted by better weather, economic opportunities, and lower costs of

living in the southern “Sun Belt” of the United States (Coats 2001; Lipman 2000).

This wave of second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans from states like New York and Illinois is said to be of a lower class, less educated, and more likely to speak English than those coming from the Island. The relations between the two groups—that is, islanders and the so-called Nuyoricans—remain an important problem, both in Puerto Rico and abroad (see Kerkhof 2000; Lorenzo-Hernández 1999; Pérez 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2003; Vargas-Ramos 2000). In Florida as in other states, Puerto Rican communities are increasingly stratified by birthplace, language, class, race, and other factors (Aranda 2009; Sánchez 2009; Silver 2010).

Analysis of 2010 census data confirms the socioeconomic differentiation between Puerto Ricans in Florida and other states (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a). In 2010, Puerto Ricans in Florida had a much higher median household income (\$41,198), than in states like Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut, where Puerto Ricans had a median of \$22,816, 26,966, and 31,486, respectively. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans in Florida had a relatively low poverty rate (18.3 percent). In Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, the poverty rates of Puerto Ricans hovered around 40 percent, more than twice that of Puerto

Ricans in Florida. In New York, Puerto Ricans had a median household income of \$33,436 and a poverty rate of 29 percent.

Despite the stronger economic standing of Puerto Ricans in Florida relative to other parts of the United States, their basic socioeconomic indicators suggest significant disadvantage vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in the state. In 2010, the median household income for Florida's entire population was \$47,661, compared to \$41,198 for Puerto Ricans. Among non-Hispanic whites, the corresponding figure was \$52,316. The causes of this persistent income gap merit further attention.

### **Racial Identities**

An intriguing question regarding Puerto Ricans in Florida is their racial composition. In the American Community Survey for 2006–10, nearly three-fourths (73.7 percent) of Florida's Puerto Ricans classified themselves as white, the highest proportion of all states (Figure 2). In contrast, 53.1 percent of Puerto Ricans in the entire United States said they were white in the 2010 census. Inversely, a smaller proportion of Puerto Ricans in Florida than elsewhere said they were black (3.8 percent), some other race (17.7 percent), or two or more races (4.1 percent). In the United States, the corresponding figures for Puerto Ricans were 8.7 percent black, 27.8 percent

some other race, and 8.7 percent two or more races. Such figures suggest that whites are overrepresented in the migrant flow to Florida, while blacks are underrepresented.

[Figure 2 about here]

How can this racial self-classification pattern be interpreted? To begin, the higher-class background of Puerto Rican migrants to Florida helps explain the larger percentage of persons of European background. Second, Puerto Ricans living in southern states, such as Florida, may classify themselves as white to avoid the strong anti-black prejudice in that region. Third, the presence of a large Latino population, especially of Cuban origin, which considers itself predominantly white, may skew the census results in favor of that racial category. In any case, the self-perception of most Puerto Ricans in Florida as white requires further reflection. Whether they are treated as white by other groups, such as non-Hispanic whites and blacks, as well as other Latinos, is another matter.

### **Political Incorporation**

During the past decade, the mass media have frequently portrayed the Puerto Rican population in Florida as a "swing



vote" that could decide local, state, and even presidential elections (Delgado 2008; Glanton 2000; *Puerto Rico Herald* 2004). Journalists have paid much attention to the increasing strength of the Democratic Party in Central Florida, largely due to the backing of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, in contrast to the predominantly Republican Cubans in South Florida. More than 70 percent of Puerto Rican voters in Florida supported the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, in the 2000 presidential elections (Lizza 2000; Milligan 2000). As Democratic Party consultant Jeffrey Farrow lamented, "If Gore had gotten 600 more votes in Florida, he would [have been] president" (cited by Friedman 2004: 5). Yet most of Florida's Puerto Ricans supported Republican Governor Jeb Bush's reelection in 2002.

The expanding Puerto Rican electorate centered in Orlando, Tampa, and Miami has become "one of the most important political battlegrounds" between Democrats and Republicans (Silva 2001). The 2004 presidential campaign targeted the Puerto Rican constituency in Central Florida as "crucial" to winning the elections (Friedman 2004; Thomas 2004). In 2004, 59 percent of Florida's Puerto Ricans favored Senator John Kerry for President, while 39 percent supported the reelection of George W. Bush. In 2008, Puerto Ricans and other Latinos helped elect President Barack Obama. But the political activities of Puerto Ricans in Florida have not been well documented from a social

scientific perspective (see Cruz 2010 for an exception). This lack of information and analysis is intriguing because Puerto Ricans are the second largest Latino group in the United States (after Mexicans) and Florida (after Cubans), and the largest in Orlando, one of the main gateways for new immigrants from Latin America (along with Miami).

Most Puerto Ricans in the United States have traditionally voted for the Democratic Party. In a Latino population dominated by Cuban Republicans, the growing Puerto Rican presence could alter Florida's electoral map. However, the Puerto Rican population boom has not yet translated into proportional political representation at local or state levels. At the time of this writing in September 2012, only four Puerto Ricans (Maurice Ferré in 1966, Tony Suárez in 1998, John Quiñones in 2004, and Darren Soto in 2007) had been elected to Florida's House of Representatives. Few have served in local school boards or county commissions. It is no wonder that Puerto Ricans have been touted as the "sleeping giant" of Florida politics, with a "growing political clout" (Lipman 2000; Story 2001).

Regarding Puerto Rico's political status, Puerto Ricans in the United States are as sharply divided as on the Island, although support for Puerto Rico becoming a state of the American union seems to be stronger in Florida than elsewhere. For instance, 55 percent of PROFESA's members preferred that

political option (PROFESA 2001). A newspaper poll showed that 48 percent of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida favored the current Commonwealth status of the Island, while 42 percent supported its complete annexation to the United States and 5 percent advocated independence (*El Nuevo Día* 2004). These figures are similar to those for the Island's population.

However, the impact of stateside Puerto Ricans on Island politics remains limited. At this point, participation in Puerto Rican elections, referenda, and plebiscites is restricted to U.S. citizens residing on the Island (including naturalized U.S. citizens of non-Puerto Rican origin, such as Dominicans and Cubans). One of the key political challenges for the Puerto Rican diaspora is how to participate effectively in Puerto Rican affairs, including the thorny question of self-determination. So far, Puerto Ricans living in Florida, as well as in other states, have been unable to vote on the Island's political future.

### **Cultural Practices**

As already noted, the Puerto Rican diaspora to Florida is part of the increasing heterogeneity of the Latino population in the state as well as nationwide. Although Cubans still dominate the economic, political, and cultural landscape of Hispanic

Florida, other groups—such as Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Nicaraguans, Mexicans, Venezuelans, and Dominicans—have increased their presence in the state. The growing mix of Latinos in Florida has multiple cultural consequences, of which I would like to single out five.

First, no group of Latin American origin can impose its own tastes, values, and practices like Cubans did in Miami for several decades since 1960. Hence, Florida's popular culture may now be truly Latino for the first time. Language, music, food, sports, and religion are being Latinized insofar as groups of various Latin American origins are contributing to the Latino mosaic. For instance, the number and variety of public cultural events (such as parades and festivals) sponsored by Puerto Rican community organizations have multiplied in Orlando, Tampa, and Miami. In this regard, Puerto Ricans are counterbalancing the "Cubanization" of Florida, together with other Latino groups (see Boswell 1995).

Second, the Spanish spoken in Central and South Florida is a mixture of various dialects, not just from Cuba and Puerto Rico, but also from other Caribbean, Central American, and South American countries. Differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and other speech patterns may well be homogenized in the long run, but the Cuban "accent" can no longer be presumed to be the norm. Quarrels over the "correct" form of Spanish may

intensify in the near future, as they have in Chicago between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). In New York City, various Spanish dialects have converged as a result of the growing blend of people of different national origins in Latin America (Otheguy and Zentella 2012).

Third, the demand for bilingual education and other public services for Spanish speakers in Florida has risen as a result of continuing immigration from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other Latin American countries (Boswell 1998). Some counties in Central Florida, such as Orange, Osceola, and Volusia, have received a large influx of immigrants, particularly from Puerto Rico and Mexico. In 2001, one out of three students in Osceola and one out of four students in Orange was Latino. Unfortunately, Latino—especially Puerto Rican—students have higher school dropout rates than other groups (Pacheco 2001a). One educational problem is that most children raised in Puerto Rico are not fluent in English when they arrive in Florida. In 2000-1, for example, 21.1 percent of the students with limited English proficiency in Orange County were of Puerto Rican origin (Postal and deLuzuriaga 2004). Hence, local public schools have actively recruited Latino and bilingual teachers and staff members in an effort to reduce Latino dropout rates (Padilla 1999).

Fourth, the degree of social interaction among different Latino groups will largely determine whether a new, hybrid identity emerges beyond their national origins. The incidence of Latino intermarriage in Miami, Orlando, and Tampa should be explored further, as it has in New York City and other places. It is also important to ascertain whether the descendants of mixed marriages identify themselves with a specific nationality or simply as Latinos. For instance, Puerto Ricans have a relatively high intermarriage rate with other ethnic and racial groups in the United States, especially Dominicans (Aquino 2011). In Miami, Puerto Ricans are more likely to marry Cubans than in Orlando. Is this simply a function of the size of each Latino community in each metropolitan area? Or does it also reflect other factors, like class and race selectivity and residential segregation, which affect intergroup relations?

Finally, the increase in Florida's Puerto Rican and Latino population might heighten tensions with other groups, such as African Americans and non-Hispanic whites. Some sectors of the U.S. population feel uncomfortable with the public use of the Spanish language. Others are opposed to the expansion of the Catholic Church, to which most Latinos belong. Add to these culturally-based frictions the competition in the labor and housing markets as well as for political power, and one can anticipate that interethnic relations between Latinos and other

groups in Florida will be increasingly explosive. These ethnic rivalries have been well documented in Miami, with its impressive mix of Cubans, Latinos of other origins, non-Hispanic whites, African Americans, Jews, and Haitians (see Stepick et al. 2003). How Puerto Ricans fit within this multiethnic picture awaits further documentation.

## **Conclusion**

The settlement patterns of Puerto Ricans have changed drastically during the last five decades. Whereas New York had been the primary destination for Puerto Rican migrants during the 1940s and 1950s, Florida became their favorite location during the 1990s. The data presented in this essay suggest that the "Mickey Ricans" could follow a different path from other Puerto Rican diaspora communities. To begin, the class background of Puerto Ricans in Florida tends to be more favorable than that of earlier population flows from the Island. On average, Puerto Ricans in Florida have higher income, occupational, and educational levels than in other states such as New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Besides, Puerto Ricans in Florida describe themselves as white more often than those living anywhere else in the United States. Many of them have avoided living in poor inner-city neighborhoods and have

resettled in suburban middle-class areas in the Orlando, Tampa, and Miami areas.

The recent Puerto Rican diaspora to Florida has a great economic, political, and cultural potential. Economically, Puerto Ricans have contributed their skills and capital to the local labor market, especially in the service sector. A thriving community of Puerto Rican entrepreneurs and professionals has emerged in South and Central Florida. Politically, Puerto Ricans are poised to influence both the Democratic and the Republican parties, as a key electoral bloc in a hotly disputed state. Culturally, Puerto Ricans are adding to Florida's ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. Despite the opposition of some established groups, the Puerto Rican and Latino population of Florida as well as the United States will continue to expand in the near future. It remains to be seen whether the host society will insist on culturally "assimilating" the immigrants, as it did with millions of people in the past, or will become an increasingly multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual country.



## **Note**

I would like to acknowledge the substantial contributions of Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez, Gina M. Pérez, and Elizabeth M. Aranda to my work about Puerto Ricans in Florida. Patricia Silver has collaborated with me on several projects dealing with this topic. Ana Yolanda Ramos-Zayas, Luis Martínez-Fernández, and my brother Raúl Duany made useful observations and recommendations on earlier versions of this essay. However, the views, analysis, and interpretation of the situation of Puerto Ricans in Florida contained in this essay are my responsibility. This essay incorporates materials from a previously published monograph on the Orlando area (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2006) and an introduction to an edited volume on Puerto Rican Florida (Duany and Silver 2010).

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Table 1

Geographic Distribution of the Puerto Rican Population in the United States, by State,  
1960–2010 (Percentages in Parentheses)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
California	28,108 (3.1)	50,929 (3.6)	93,038 (4.6)	126,417 (4.6)	140,570 (4.1)	189,945 (3.8)
Connecticut	15,247 (1.7)	37,603 (1.9)	88,361 (4.4)	146,842 (5.4)	194,443 (5.7)	252,972 (5.4)
Florida	19,535 (2.2)	28,166 (2.0)	94,775 (4.7)	247,010 (9.1)	482,027 (14.2)	847,550 (17.1)
Illinois	36,081 (4.0)	87,477 (6.1)	129,165 (6.4)	146,059 (5.4)	157,851 (4.6)	182,989 (4.6)
Massachusetts	5,217 (0.6)	23,332 (1.6)	76,450 (3.8)	151,193 (5.5)	199,207 (5.8)	266,125 (5.7)
New Jersey	55,351 (6.2)	138,896 (9.7)	243,540 (12.1)	320,133 (11.7)	366,788 (10.8)	434,092 (10.3)
New York	642,622	916,608	986,389	1,086,601	1,050,293	1,070,558

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	(72.0)	(64.1)	(49.0)	(39.8)	(30.8)	(27.9)
Ohio	13,940	20,272	32,442	45,853	66,269	94,965
	(1.6)	(1.4)	(1.6)	(1.7)	(1.9)	(1.9)
Pennsylvania	21,206	44,263	91,802	148,988	228,557	366,082
	(2.4)	(3.1)	(4.6)	(5.5)	(6.7)	(6.9)
Texas	6,050	6,333	22,938	42,981	69,504	130,576
	(0.7)	(0.4)	(1.1)	(1.6)	(2.0)	(2.3)
Other states	49,156	75,517	155,045	265,677	450,669	1,230,779
	(5.5)	(5.3)	(7.7)	(9.7)	(13.2)	(13.9)
Total	892,513	1,429,396	2,013,945	2,727,754	3,406,178	4,623,716
	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)

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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2012a, 2012b.

Table 2

Population of Puerto Rican Origin in Florida, by County, 2010

	Number of Persons	As Percent of Puerto Ricans in State	As Percent of All Latinos in County	As Percent of All Residents in County
Orange	149,457	17.6	47.5	13.0
Miami-Dade	92,358	10.9	5.7	3.7
Hillsborough	91,476	10.8	29.8	7.4
Broward	75,840	8.9	17.3	4.3
Osceola	72,986	8.6	59.8	27.2
Palm Beach	39,529	4.7	15.8	3.0
Polk	34,825	4.1	32.7	5.8
Seminole	34,378	4.1	47.4	8.1
Volusia	27,679	3.3	50.1	5.6
Lee	24,503	2.9	21.6	4.0
All other counties	204,519	24.1	—	—
Total	847,550	100.0	—	—

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012a.

Table 3

## Top Ten Metropolitan Areas with Puerto Rican Residents in the United States, 2010

	Number of Puerto Ricans	As Percent of Latinos	As Percent of Total Population
New York-Northern New Jersey- Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	1,177,430	27.2	6.2
Orlando-Kissimmee, FL	269,781	50.1	12.6
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	238,866	51.1	4.0
Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	207,727	8.9	3.7
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL- IN-WI	180,502	9.2	2.0
Tampa-St. Petersburg- Clearwater, FL	143,886	31.2	5.2
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	115,087	28.0	2.5
Hartford-West Hartford-East	102,911	68.1	8.5

Hartford, CT			
Springfield, MA	87,798	82.4	12.7
New Haven-Milford, CT	77,578	59.8	9.0

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012a.



Table 4

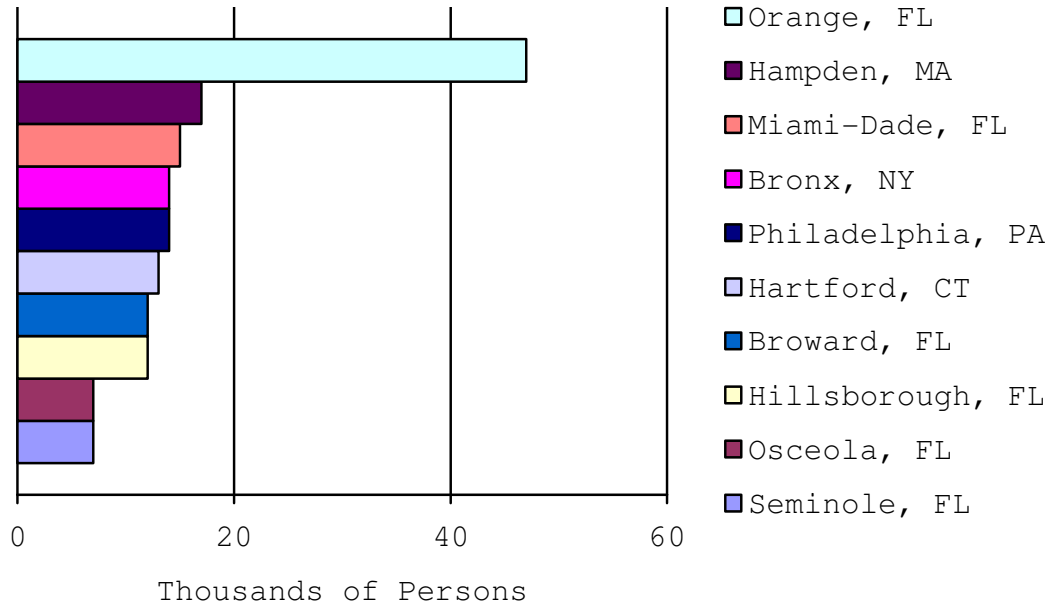
Occupational Distribution of Latinos in the Orlando-Kissimmee Metropolitan Area, by  
National Origin, 2007-9 (in Percentages)

	Mexican	Puerto Rican	Cuban	Central American	South American
Management, professional, and related	9.4	23.0	27.2	16.3	22.6
Sales and office	10.3	32.0	26.3	20.4	30.3
Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair	39.8	10.5	14.5	23.8	10.4
Production, transport, and material moving	10.3	11.7	10.0	12.9	12.5
Service	25.0	22.5	21.7	26.1	23.9
Farming, fishing, and forestry	5.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012a.

Figure 1

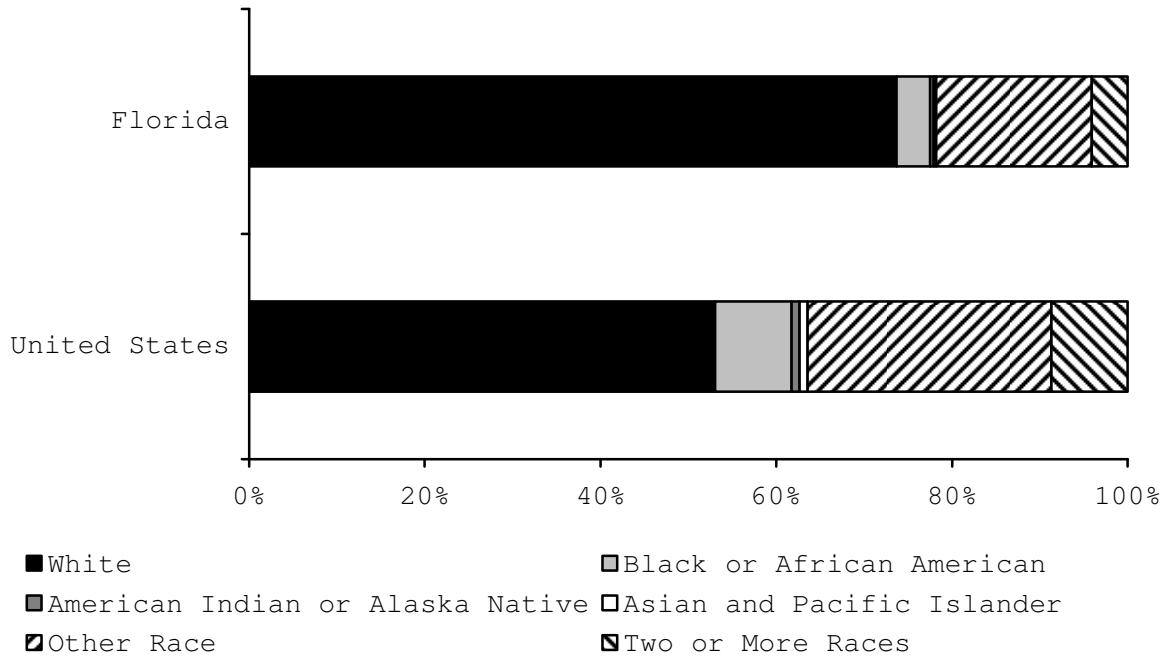
Main Destinations of Migrants from Puerto Rico to the United States, 2000–9



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012a.

Figure 2

Racial Self-Classification of Puerto Ricans in Florida and in  
the United States, 2006–10



Sources: Ennis et al. 2011; U.S. Census Bureau 2012a.