

AFRICALOGICAL PERSPECTIVES 2004—2014

THE DECADE EDITION—TEN YEARS OF SCHOLARLY COLLABORATION, INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGE,
AND THE IMPERATIVE OF CHRONICLING THE PURSUIT OF BLACK FREEDOM

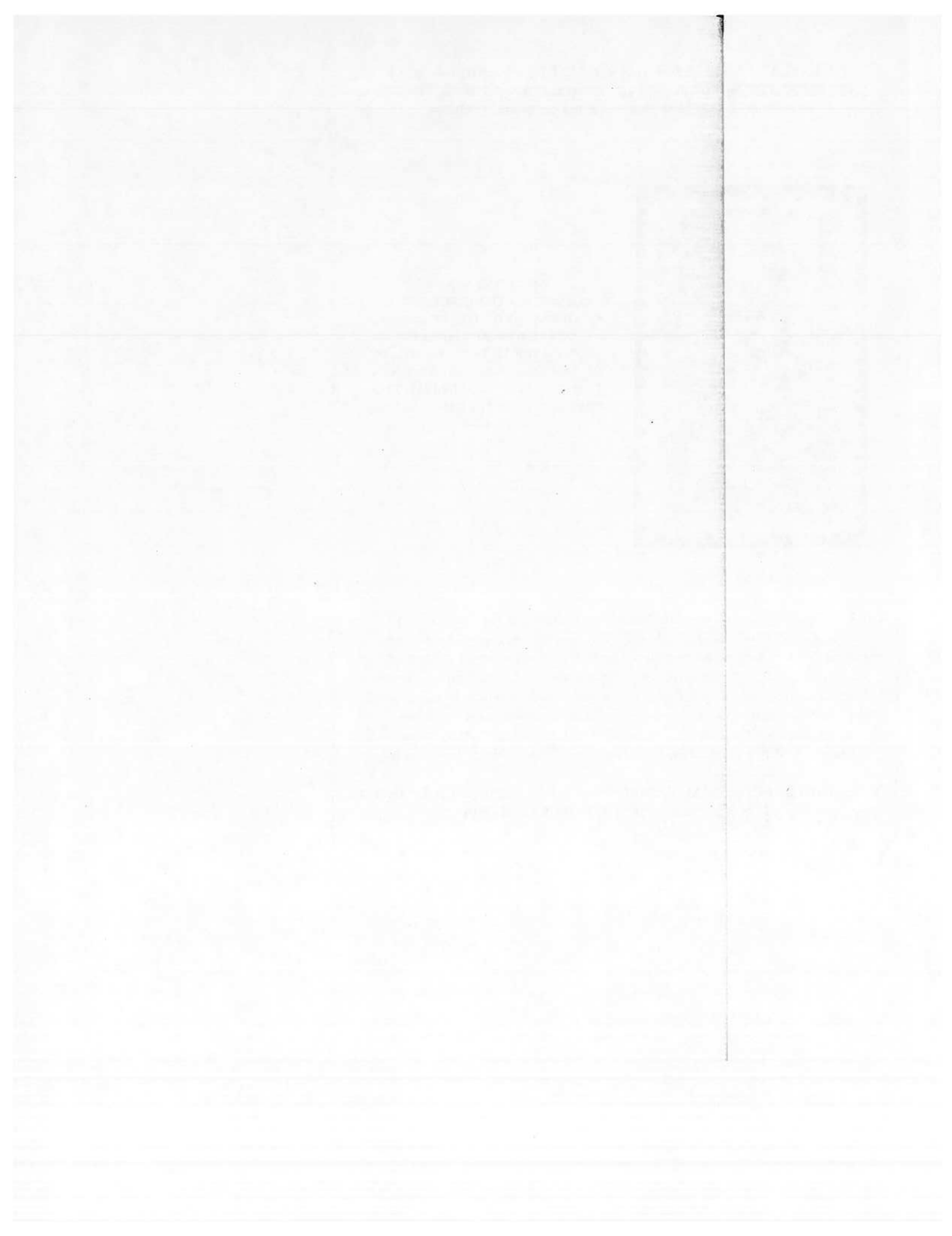


AN 8 CENT STAMP
COMMEMORATING THE 450TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING
OF PUERTO RICO (ISSUED
SEPTEMBER 12, 1971); CASTILLO
DE SAN FELIPE DEL MORRO, SAN
JUAN WAS FOUNDED IN 1519; THE
FORTRESS CONSTRUCTION BEGAN
IN 1539

The U.S. Census does not provide “racial” classifications for Puerto Rico for the records covering 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990. Therefore, Puerto Ricans were not classified by race during four decades. The U.S. Census resumes the use of racial categories for Puerto Rico in 2000 in which 19.5 percent identified as non-whites and 80.5 percent of the population identified as White. In other words, 61 percent more whites than non-whites in 2000 which contrasted to a 59.44 percent more whites than non-whites in 1950. In fact, according to the U.S. Census the White population increased about .5 percent in those decades.

THE SHIFTING COLONIAL RACIAL DISCOURSE IN PUERTO RICO: THE U.S. CENSUS AND THE POPULAR MEDIA

JOSÉ R. DÍAZ-GARAYÚA



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Introduction

A colony of Spain until 1898, thereafter a colony of the United States, Puerto Rico has been constantly subjected to representations from the U.S. This paper presents parallel discourses on race, ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship: The institutional and official discourse of the U.S. Census and the unofficial discourse of popular media specifically the *National Geographic* magazine. This paper uncovers and explicates through various examples the changing discourse of the *National Geographic* on Puerto Rico, its people, and its relationship to the United States. It is evident that: 1) The official discourse, possibly about inclusion, emanates from a government agency (the U.S. Census) and 2) the unofficial discourse, possibly about exclusion, comes from the popular media (the *National Geographic*). As a result the official and unofficial discourse excuses past aggressions and legitimizes the persistent American hegemony on Puerto Rico.

Legitimization is derived from the construction of knowledge, which results from cultural, political, and economic processes at the national sphere and then is exported to the international community through the mass media.¹ McAlister elaborates, “Cultural productions help to make meanings by their historical association with other types of meaning-making activity.”² Relationships between the national and international spaces are intertwined in the making of empire.³ Puerto Rico is not an exception. Puerto Rico, despite being called a Commonwealth (an inaccurate and loosely applied term translated from *Estado Libre*

¹Amy Kaplan (2002) *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 6.

²McAlister, Melani (2001) *Epic Encounters: culture, media, and U.S. interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, 8.

³Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 2002.

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Asociado) is nonetheless, a non-incorporated territory of the United States. Indeed, the Supreme Court case of 1901, *Downes v. Bidwell* helps us to understand this dynamic as Justice Edward D. White argued: “whilst in an international sense Porto Rico was not a foreign country, since it was subject to sovereignty of and was owned by the United States, it was foreign to the United States in a domestic sense, because the island has not been incorporated into the United States, but was merely appurtenant thereto as a possession.”⁴

White’s argument uncovered a series of differences worth of exploration. For instance, Justice Henry Billings Brown contended that Puerto Rico, like other possessions, was “inhabited by alien races, differing from us in religion, customs, laws, methods of taxation, and modes of thought.” In other words, the risks of the U.S. imperial enterprise might result in the entrance of foreigners—the other—to the U.S. and this mixing could jeopardize the U.S. identity.⁵ Brown’s concerns pointed to the clear cut distinction between domestic and national status and how this might be blurred with that of foreign and international standing. Consequently, White’s argument about Puerto Rico as “foreign in a domestic sense” legally transformed the island into “a buffer zone.”⁶

Another perceived threat was the issue of citizenship. How to grant U.S. citizenship to foreigners of a newly acquire territory without undermining the U.S. citizenship of Americans? The answer was solved in what Puerto Ricans perceived as a “second class citizenship”; one in which it would benefit from all rights of the U.S. citizenship, where Puerto Ricans had to move into a state (or, at least, a federal district status like the District of Columbia, as opposed to commonwealth status) because it is a non-incorporated territory (a colony). As Kaplan indicates “the notion of “foreign” in “a domestic sense” maintains Puerto Rico as a “possession” and its people as quasi-slaves “acquired” to differentiate U.S. citizenship from the degradation of slavery.”⁷

⁴*Downes v. Bidwell*, 182 U.S. 244 (1901), 341–342.

⁵Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 2002, 159.

⁶Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 2002, 7.

⁷Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 2002, 9.

Conversely, there are other agents that participate in these imperial projects, as mentioned earlier, such as the popular media and its business of portraying *culture*. The popular media has been an instrument to legitimized, in this case, the United States' discourse of conquest and occupation. The powerful advantage of popular media's photos and texts "lies in its capacity to be invested with the true."⁸ The images of imperialism are not solely those produced by the government, as Kaplan argues:

Domestic metaphors of national identity are intimately intertwined with renderings of the foreign and the alien, and that the notions of the domestic and the foreign mutually constitute one another in an imperial context. Locating Puerto Rico legally and spatially was not only the work of judges and cartographers, but also the work of culture in imbuing geography with meaning, in defining such common-sense notions as near and far, inside and outside, here and there. The Supreme Court justices in 1901 were participating in imperial culture's broader project of mapping boundaries between the domestic and the foreign.⁹

As a result, we might distinguish between two parallel discourses, yet not always similar but, with the same intention: the making and the continuity of the imperial project. Here, to reiterate, I examine two racial discourses: 1) The government official discourse, possibly about inclusion, from a government agency (the U.S. Census) and 2) the unofficial discourse, possibly about exclusion, from the popular media (the *National Geographic*).

Imperial (Re)Presentations Of The World

Western countries, especially the United States, perceive themselves as the administrators of universal truth and values and,

⁸Vergara, Benito (1995) Vergara, Benito M. (1995) *Displaying Filipinos: Photography and Colonialism in Early 20th Century Philippines*. University of the Philippines Press: Manila, Philippines, 7.

⁹Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 2002, 4.

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therefore, expect other countries and nations to assume a subordinate position with respect to them. The U.S. imperial enterprise around the world is well known. As a simple example, today, we might observe a series of advertisements which resonate “America’s NAVY: a global force for good”¹⁰ providing the U.S. an image of a benevolent supremacy. However, the U.S. imperial enterprise has been in the making a prolonged period of time. The use of images (i.e. iconography, photographs, and texts) has been used to promote ideology and to legitimize the U.S. imperial discourse.

The expositions at the early World’s Fairs (from the Gilded Age into the Progressive Era) were examples of this process of legitimization. Rydell indicates, “If one function of these expositions was to make the social world comprehensible, the directors of the fairs attempted to organize the direction of the society from a particular perspective. These events were triumphs of hegemony as well as symbolic edifices.”¹¹ He adds:

World’s fairs performed a hegemonic function precisely because they propagated the ideas and values of the country’s political, financial, corporate, and intellectual leaders and offered these ideas as the proper interpretation of social and political reality. While the expositions were arenas for asserting the moral authority of the United States government as opposed to its coercive power, numerous military exhibits suggested that force was available to maintain order whenever and wherever necessary.¹²

These expositions, very often, promoted the idea of a superior White race vis-à-vis less civilized and intelligent non-White races through anthropological exhibitions designed to present a racial hierarchy of humankind. This “imperialist rhetoric came directly from the assumption that all people were capable of civilization and

¹⁰www.navy.com and www.youtube.com typing “America’s Navy: a global force for good.” The tagline is trademarked. <http://www.navy.com/about/gffg.html>

¹¹Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, University of Chicago Press, 1987, 2.

¹²*Ibid.*, 3.

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should have the cultural opportunity of ‘benevolent’ Americanization.”¹³

However, these expositions also intended the broadening of the U.S. commercial interests overseas and, with this, the idea of a “commercial protectorate” (or a neocolonial enterprise) as part of the Monroe Doctrine. For instance, the 1901 Pan-American Exposition of Buffalo depicted the newly acquired possessions of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Philippines among others showing not just the “types of people” but also resources and potential investment opportunities. “There was no doubt that the exposition was intended to promote American capital investment in Latin America and to demonstrate its market potential for American surplus production.”¹⁴ These world fairs were a “symbolic construct centered on the interpenetration of Darwinian theories about racial development and utopian dreams about material and national progress.”¹⁵

Similarly, the propaganda of ideas and ideologies are transmitted through texts, photographs, and in popular magazines. The *National Geographic* has published articles portraying natural resources as well as characteristics of local people. These articles exploit images of “otherness” accentuating differences and promoting the belief that people in distant (or nearby) areas need the “American tutelage in managing their future” in order to be successful in the international arena.¹⁶

The U.S. (Re)Presentation Of Puerto Rico

On April 25, 1898 the United States declared war on Spain. This action resulted from the desire of the U.S. to expand and Puerto Rico was one of many targets. In fact, “On June 12, 1898, Roosevelt [wrote] ... ‘You must get Manila and Hawaii, you must

¹³McAlister, Melani (2001) *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. University of California Press: Berkeley, California, 30.

¹⁴Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 91.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 143.

prevent any talk of peace until we get Porto Rico and the Philippines as well as secure the independence of Cuba.”¹⁷

On July 25, 1898, the American troops invaded Puerto Rico. Less than a month after the United States invasion of Puerto Rico the armistice of the Spanish-American War was declared. The autonomy that Puerto Rico was finally experiencing from Spain was put to an end on October 18, 1898 when a Military Government took over the island’s affairs. The military government was extended until May 1, 1900 when the governor and many other key members were appointed by the president of the U.S.

The American Census and Puerto Rico

The United States War Department carried out a census in Puerto Rico during 1899. The census is an important instrument in characterizing a nation. Questions such as “race” tend to be central in many, if not all, censuses. Christopher argues, “The census thus seeks to project the state’s national image, which in turn reflects the programmes and imperatives of the regime in power.”¹⁸ “Nowhere was this process more in evidence than in the colonial context where colonial officials had to resort to the process of simplification and hence classification to bring order into the apparent diversity of colonial populations.”¹⁹ Thus, the newly acquired colony of Puerto Rico was to be transformed, as fast as possible, in order to receive the approval of a public eager to know these foreign territories conquest by the U.S.; and to satisfy entrepreneurial interests in securing economic opportunities in the colony.

Therefore, the U.S. introduced a new system of codification. In an island where there might be found as many as twenty major folk terms designating “racial” status²⁰, Puerto Ricans find themselves confined to two “racial” terms (i.e. White and non-

¹⁷Trías Monge, José (1997) *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*. Yale University Press: New Haven, Connecticut, 25-26.

¹⁸ Christopher, A. J. “Delineating the nation: South African censuses 1865–2007.” *Political geography* 28, no. 2 (2009): 101-109, 101.

¹⁹Ibid., 102.

²⁰Duany, J. (2002). *The Puerto Rican nation on the move: Identities on the island and in the United States*. The University of North Carolina Press, 238.

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White) assigned by the Military Government and the U.S. Census. In that way, the U.S. undertook the task of Americanizing – and whitening – the nation of Puerto Rico. For instance, the Report Census of Puerto Rico in 1899 stipulates “With reference to race, the population of Porto Rico is divided by the census into two main classes – those who are and those who are not pure whites, or Caucasians.”²¹ (See Table 1: Tabulation of the U.S. Census 1899 of Puerto Rico below) The Report Census also indicates, “The word “colored” ... includes a very few (75) Chinese and many persons of mixed White and negro blood, as well as the pure negroes. Somewhat more than three-fifths of the population of Porto Rico are pure white, and nearly two-fifths are partly or entirely negro.”²²

TABLE 1: TABULATION OF THE U.S. CENSUS 1899 OF PUERTO RICO

Race	Number	Percent
White	589,426	61.8
Colored	363,817	38.2
Total	953,243	100.0

The Report Census, as a method used to influence the acceptance of the new territorial possession among (White) Americans, includes various tables which expose proportions of “whites” and “blacks”. Table 1 above (Tabulation of the U.S. Census 1899 of Puerto Rico) reproduces the data about the proportions of White and “colored”. Additional data from this report uses other West Indian Islands as a comparison (see Table 2 Proportion of Populations in West Indies [After the Report Census of Puerto Rico, 1899] below).

TABLE 2: PROPORTION OF POPULATIONS IN WEST INDIES (AFTER THE REPORT CENSUS OF PUERTO RICO, 1899)

Country or State	Date of Census	Percent of White	Percent of Colored

²¹United States War Department, *Report on the Census of Porto Rico, 1899*. Washington: Government Printing Office. (Retrieved on June 11, 2012 from <http://archive.org/details/reportoncensuso100unitala>), 55.

²²*Ibid.*, 56.

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Jamaica	1891	2.3	97.7
Leeward Islands	1891	4.0	96.0
St. Vincent	1891	6.0	94.0
Turks and Caicos	1891	8.1	91.9
Barbados	1891	8.6	91.4
Bahamas	1891	25.3	74.7
Bermudas	1897	38.4	61.6
Porto Rico	1899	61.8	38.2
Cuba	1899	66.9	33.1

The Report Census used the idea of a “White” Puerto Rico (and Cuba, which also was invaded by the United States as a result of the Spanish-Cuban-American War). In fact, the Census Report indicates that, “the two islands of Cuba and Porto Rico are exceptional in having a majority of whites.”²³ The Report Census goes even further when it states, “there are several American states with a smaller proportion of whites in 1890 than Porto Rico had in 1899.”²⁴ The Report indicates the following states with their respective percentage of “White” citizens: South Carolina 40.1, Mississippi 42.3, Louisiana 49.9, Georgia 53.3, Alabama 55.1, Florida 57.5, and Virginia 61.6. In this way, the government engages in an official campaign to influence the public opinion about Puerto Rico. The Census Report’s racial discourse aligns Puerto Rico with the American imagery of a “White” country.

At this time, the mass media echoed the official discourse of the United States government. The *National Geographic* magazine voiced the colonial enterprise. Moreover, during the *National Geographic*’s first years, its articles were reinforced by scholars. Tuason exposes, “Early volumes of the *National Geographic* magazine featured articles written by such prominent geographers as William Morris Davis (1888), Grove Karl Gilbert (1898), Marthe Krug Genthe (1901), and Adolphus W. Greely (1901).”²⁵

²³Ibid., 56.

²⁴Ibid., 56.

²⁵Tuason, Julie A. (1999) The Ideology of Empire in *National Geographic Magazine*’s Coverage of the Philippines, 1898-1908. *The Geographical Review* 89(1): 34-53, 36.

It was with this academic and scientific approach that the *National Geographic* was founded in 1888. However, “Not until 1903 did the magazine take a resolute turn towards its now-familiar, ‘popularized’ geographical format.”²⁶ Thus, its origin as an academic and scientific magazine gave *National Geographic* the needed authority to legitimize its discourse.

(Re)Presenting Puerto Rico and Its People

The first article about Puerto Rico in *National Geographic* is entitled “Porto Rico or Puerto Rico?” appeared March 1899. The article is a survey of the island’s resources and its people which emphasizes the “preponderancy of its white population.”²⁷ Another article, “The first American Census of Porto Rico”, argued about the concept of “a white Puerto Rican population” in order to create a public opinion of acceptance. The article elaborated the idea of whiteness contrasting the population of Puerto Rico with that of the Philippines (also acquired by the U.S. as a result of the Spanish-Cuban-American War). *National Geographic* also introduces other aspects of propaganda—religion—by 1924 in the article entitled “Porto Rico, The Gate of Riches.” Religion was also used to legitimize territorial and economic expansion and the *National Geographic* was able to insert in this article photos such as one showing a trolley with the inscription “IN GOD WE TRUST” and therefore relating how the Christian faith of Puerto Ricans was aligned with American values.²⁸ Curiously, the U.S. Census and the first *National Geographic* magazine articles about Puerto Rico contradict Justice Henry Billings Brown who contended that Puerto Rico, like other possessions was “inhabited by alien races, differing

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Hill, Robert T. “Porto Rico or Puerto Rico?” *National Geographic* (December 1899), 516-517.

²⁸To review methods of textual narration and photo processing, refer to Mendelson, Andrew L. and Fabienne Darling-Wolf (2009) “Reader’s interpretations of visual and verbal narratives of a *National Geographic* story on Saudi Arabia.” *Journalism* 10(6): 798-818.

from us in religion ...”²⁹ The popular media echoes the government’s institutions and helped them to create an image of a “White” Puerto Rico.

On December 1939 *National Geographic* published another article entitled “Puerto Rico: Watchdog of the Caribbean” which identified the island as the first line of American defense. However, this article enlarges the concept of the existent dichotomy between citizenship and nationality on a distant island. In other words, this article brings the notion of “a buffer zone”³⁰ throughout intermediate images between Spanish imprint and the U.S. citizenship (and occupation). First, the article states that, “Puerto Ricans ... have been American citizens, and so all are properly ‘Americans.’”³¹ Moreover, Long continues, “In many ways, however, Puerto Rico is a Spanish island and San Juan a Spanish town.”³² These sentences uncover the concept of nationality and citizenship and make it clear these are two different terms. The continuous rhetoric of “to be or not to be” American, relegates Puerto Rico as it is today (since 1898), a possession and consigns the Puerto Ricans to a second class citizenship. In other words, at this point, the *National Geographic* is no longer following the state concept of a White possession but establishing differences based on nationality where Puerto Ricans are now identified as a different ethnic group despite being whitened by the U.S. Censuses, especially the 1910 and 1920 censuses where “Puerto Rico became whiter in the second decade of the twentieth-century primarily through change in the socio-cultural definition of whiteness itself.”³³ In fact, the U.S. Census percentages for 1910 were 34.5 percent non-White and 65.5 percent White, by 1920 was 27 percent

²⁹Amy Kaplan (2002), *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 6.

³⁰Ibid., 7.

³¹Long, E. John, “Puerto Rico: Watchdog of the Caribbean: Venerable Domain Under American Flag Has New Role as West Indian Stronghold and Sentinel of the Panama Canal,” *National Geographic* (December 1939), 697-738, 702.

³²Ibid., 702.

³³Loveman, Mara, and Jeronimo O. Muniz, “How Puerto Rico became White: Boundary dynamics and intercensus racial reclassification.” *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 6 (2007): 915-939. 917.

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non-White and 73 percent White, and by 1930 25.7 percent non-White and 74.3 percent White. However, despite these U.S. categorizations and percentages during these decades, Puerto Rico is represented in an intermediate position.

The U.S. Census data from 1940 and 1950 presented an even whiter Puerto Rico with an increase of more than 10 percent from the U.S. Census of 1930 to 1950. These increases in White population seem to equate with development. The article of 1951, "Growing Pains Beset Puerto Rico" points out the construction of the new airport, picturesque images of Puerto Rico as well as different types of industries in which Americans had taken part in the expansion—such as Earl Crane, president of Iroquois China Company and developer Leonard D. Long from Charleston, South Carolina. The articles make it possible to equate Puerto Rico as being transformed from a "savage" or "wild" stage to a "civilized" position throughout the period of urbanization. Similarly, an 1962 article, "Puerto Rico's Seven-League Bootstrap" showed the contrast between old, Spanish and poverty versus new, American and economic growth.

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However, in 2003 the *National Geographic* magazine presented an interesting (and controversial) article, "True Colors: Divided Loyalties in Puerto Rico." This article completely changes its discourse. Unlike the articles emphasizing the "preponderance of the white population," the Christian faith and the urbanization which might be a definition of Americanness through posited values and material aspects, this article finally highlights, through familiar images and texts the African ancestry of a Puerto Rican society:

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“Drumbeats drive Gina Avilés as she sways to *bomba* music at El Alambique bar in Loíza. The heavily percussive music originated more than two centuries ago with enslaved Africans brought to work the local sugar plantations.”³⁴ In addition, the article states “Also in Loíza Aldea, a Palo Mayombe priest performs a sacrifice. The religion, based on African Yoruba belief, arrived with the slave trade.”³⁵

The U.S. Census of 2010, seven years after the 2003 article, showed a shift in the racial classification of Puerto Rico. For the first time, since the first U.S. colonial census of 1899 (as well as the Spanish colonial census of 1830), was there a registered increase of non-White population. In the 2000 U.S. Census 19.5 percent of the population self-classified as non-White in comparison to 2010 where 25.6 percent of the inhabitants of the island self-classified as non-White. Table 3 shows the percentages of non-White population and White population as well as the difference between for the White percentage (See Table 3: Percent of Non-White and White and Difference for White below).

TABLE 3: PERCENT OF NON-WHITE AND WHITE AND DIFFERENCE FOR WHITE			
Census	Percent of Non-White	Percent of White	Difference of White
1802	52	48	-4
1812	53.2	46.8	-6.4
1820	55.6	44.4	-11.2
1827	50.3	49.7	-0.6
1830	49.9	50.1	0.2
1836	47.1	52.1	5
1860	48.50	51.50	3
1877	43.73	56.27	12.54
1887	40.53	59.47	18.94
1899	38.17	61.83	23.66
1910	34.50	65.50	31
1920	27.00	73.00	46
1930	25.70	74.30	48.6
1940	23.50	76.50	53
1950	20.28	79.72	59.44
1960			

³⁴Cockburn, Andrew (2003) “True Colors: Divided Loyalties in Puerto Rico,” *National Geographic*, 203(3):34-56, 43. (Available online without the images at: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0303/feature2/fulltext.html>)

³⁵Ibid., 51.

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	From 1960 to 1990, U.S. Censuses in Puerto Rico did not include a query about "race".		
1970			
1980			
1990			
2000	19.50	80.50	61
2010	25.60	74.40	48.8

(Source: Report Census of Puerto Rico 1899 and U.S. Census)

Conclusion: The U.S.'s Un-Expected Paradox

The discourse of a benevolent supremacy breaks down when the U.S. is unable to deliver the program of economic growth sold to Puerto Rico, resulting in the same failure as Spain over four centuries. After this disappointment, the discourse of whiteness is then replaced with one based on African heritage (suggesting an Africanization of the island), the dialogue on Christianity is replaced with one based on the legacy of African religious beliefs, and the conversation on economic richness is replaced with a discourse of dependency. This was, in part, accomplished by assigning a negative impression of the African image. The *National Geographic* portrayed Puerto Rico as a foreign entity completely unrelated to the U.S. In the words of Ishita Sinha Roy, "race and socio-economic class become conflated, so that people of color are equated with 'culture' and whiteness become synonymous with modern "civilization'."³⁶

National Geographic as well as other mass media engaged in a consented relationship with government that blurs journalism and entertainment impacting a "cultural cartography of modernity that brandishes a discourse of jurisdiction, of frontiers between public, social, and private spaces, between political processes and entertainment dynamics, between citizens and consumers."³⁷ More problematic, very often mass media has the ability to transform the issues in spectacles. Duchesne-Winter exposes, "today the success ... is measured by its ability to penetrate media and become a highly

³⁶Roy, Ishita Sinha. "Worlds apart: nation-branding on the National Geographic Channel." *Media, Culture and Society* 29, no. 4 (2007): 569-592, 573.

³⁷Álvarez-Curbelo, Sylvia (2007) "Entertainment Tonight! Puerto Rican Media and the Privatization of Politics," in Francis Negrón-Muntaner (Ed.) *None of the Above: Puerto Ricans in the Global Era*. Palgrave: New York, NY, 100.

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rated spectacle within corporate standards.”³⁸ Consequently, as long as Puerto Rico is perceived as foreign to the U.S. (just as the current definition of colony or non-incorporated territory or foreign in a domestic sense) and therefore unable to be seriously covered by the U.S. media, the island will be perceived, by the average American audience, as a piece of land—and its people—unrelated to and faraway of the U.S. The popular media’s representation of the island reinforces the isolation of Puerto Rico, already trapped in a colonial status without voice, having a similar effect as that of gerrymandering and annulling minority groups in the U.S.

The U.S. presents a very disturbing problem and it is clear enough: the big paradox of the United States is the dual message (and existence) of imperialism and democracy. As Walden Bello points out “An American Empire faces a particularly vexing problem when it comes to establishing its own legitimacy. After all, the country was born through an anti-imperialism insurgency against the British Empire.”³⁹ At this time, there is no doubt that the imperial policy of the United States towards Puerto Rico is reverberating back to them as a problematic—a mistake produced not just by colonization but also by imposing (in 1917) U.S. citizenship on Puerto Ricans. As Michael Shelden explain: “It is easy enough to see how imperialism enslaves its subjects, but the great lesson ... is that the system also has endless ways of enslaving its masters.”⁴⁰ ■

³⁸Duchesne-Winter, Juan (2007) “Vieques: Protest as a Consensual Spectacle,” in Frances Negrón-Muntaner (Ed.) *None of the Above: Puerto Ricans in the Global Era*. Palgrave: New York, NY, 95.

³⁹Bello, Walden (2005) *Dilemmas of Domination: The Unmaking of the American Empire*. Metropolitan Books: New York, NY, 193.

⁴⁰Michael Shelden (1991) *Orwell, the Authorized Biography*, New York: Harper Collins, 106.

