



The real progressive solution for Puerto Rico's political status is its independence

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Navy invaded Puerto Rico on July 25th, 1898. The transfer of the island was done between Spain and the U.S., and Puerto Ricans had no say in it. This transfer recognized the reality of a colonial conquest, thus any legitimacy springing from it is colonial in nature. In 1917, Congress enacted the Jones Act and with it imposed U.S. Citizenship on Puerto Ricans. Conditions to not be a U.S. citizen were so onerous (it amounted to a civil death) that Puerto Ricans --including some of the most prominent pro-independence leaders at the time-- decided to fight “the regime within the regime.”

Today, the vast majority of Puerto Ricans, and a growing number of Americans, are finally calling and acknowledging that Puerto Rico is a colony. The values of self-determination, social justice, and fierce anti-colonialism should be at the core of any elected official that identifies with progressive politics. The only dignified solution to a colonial problem is a binding, self-executing, self-determination process. And the only truly progressive and decolonizing option is independence.

PROGRESSIVES SHOULD EMBRACE PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE

Historically, pro-independence supporters have stood against America's colonial abuse in Puerto Rico. The independence movement has fought for workers' rights and unions, women empowerment, environmental protection, social justice, an economy that works for the majority and not the wealthy few, local economic development, higher taxes for foreign corporations, solidarity with the discriminated African-American and Latino communities, and has been an early supporter of marriage equality. Not only have *independentistas* been on the side of progressive struggles and values for more than a century, they have actually been persecuted, criminalized, incarcerated and murdered precisely because they have fought to assert Puerto Rico's right to exist. But in spite of this onslaught, in the 2012 status referendum, 39% of Puerto Ricans voted for political sovereignty.

Meanwhile, the so-called Puerto Rican “progressives” of the New Progressive Party (PNP, for its acronym in Spanish) or the Popular Democratic Party (PPD, for its acronym in Spanish), have defended and encouraged U.S. interventionist policies in Puerto Rico. Both parties, which have had long-standing members in the U.S. Democratic Party, have governed Puerto Rico through a pro-corporate, anti-labor, and anti-environmental vision and the results are there for everyone to see: corruption, sky-high debt and a bankrupt economy that has triggered the largest exodus of Puerto Ricans ever. The PNP and PPD have been active in engineering the economic debacle of Puerto Rico, while enriching themselves and creating one of the most clientelist state apparatus in the region.

Moreover the statehood option has been constantly supported by the most radical, right-wing extremists in Puerto Rico. Governor Rosselló, president of the PNP, has signed staunchly anti-labor, pro-austerity legislation and is in the process of taking away more rights from Puerto Rican workers because he has conceded to the FOMB budgetary demands. These are precisely the same rights that U.S. Progressives are fighting for in Congress. The PNP also courts the conservative-evangelical Christians that oppose a woman's right to choose, gay marriage and the separation of church and state.

The evidence is mounting: the real progressives in Puerto Rico are in the pro-independence movement.

Boricuas Unidos en la Diáspora is a network of Puerto Rican professionals ready to activate other Boricuas in the Diaspora to directly fund community-led organizations in Puerto Rico. Since 2017, its members have worked together towards: building bridges between Puerto Rican community leaders and federal lawmakers, educating for structural change and long-term economic development, and educating and activating the Diaspora through an anticolonial and social justice lens.