The State of Latino Communities in the Northeast: Influence Beyond Their Numbers

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The influence on national law and policy of the nine states in the Northeast corridor, north of Delaware and east of Ohio, is both historic and contemporary. Admittedly, more the former than the latter in the last several decades, the region does retain its primordial role in higher education, finance, fashion, unionized labor and especially urban policy. The path between Philadelphia to New York City to Boston is characterized by vast metropolitan and suburban areas that, given its home to the largest city in the country, with the largest school system, largest cache of public housing, and largest police force, creates an outsized influence on urban America, and hence America as a whole.

For Latino communities, migration to the Northeast was less about those power dynamics than about labor shortages, America's hegemony over the entire hemisphere (González 2011), and familiarity with neighborhoods already occupied by *compatriotas* decades ago. The Northeast region is home to the largest concentrations of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Ecuadorans and the second largest concentration of Cubans. All other Latino nationalities call California, Texas or Florida their primary home within the United States. Since Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Ecuadorans rank second, fifth and tenth, respectively within the larger Latino family of nationalities nationwide (Pew) that amounts to a lot of Latinos who decided to migrate, instead, to the fastest-growing regions of the South, Southwest and West.

But make no mistake about it, compared to the rest of the country's Latino communities, the Northeast is decidedly Caribbean as it is decidedly Puerto Rican. Puerto Rican outmigration from the Northeast is not a new phenomenon but the region still is home to the largest *Boricua* concentrations. Dominican settlement in the region continues unabated and in places like Rhode Island it has flourished into burgeoning political power. Cubans in the 1950s gravitated more to New York than any other place before migrating south to join long-standing home communities in Miami and Tampa. Indeed, New York City was the quintessential magnet for emigration from these Antillean Islands and it became the epicenter for outmigration to the Northeast region.

Migration to the Northeast, from the days that Puerto Ricans trickled through Ellis Island towards New York City in the interregnum between U.S. occupation and U.S. citizenship, Dominicans arrived in Washington Heights in mid-twentieth century, Ecuadorans and Colombians settled in Queens, and the paths from Puebla and Oaxaca bring Mexicans to the region today (Serrano; Hernández & Torres-Saillant; Castaño; Smith) unfortunately coincided with a decline in the manufacturing sector and the initial rise of a knowledge-based economy. The degree of transnationalism among the larger groups of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Ecuadorans, and Colombians that continues to retain their attention towards their home countries is also a factor in the debate over advancement and acculturation. Unionization and its prevalence in this region has stemmed the decline in wages overall as it has produced significant influence over local politics. Nonetheless, challenges remain for advancement through asset accumulation and homeownership, for parity with living wages, and for educational advancement overall for all working class people in the region, especially its Latinos.

Nestled within these economic challenges are unique Latino contributions to bilingual government systems, criminal justice reforms and victories in the political representation arena that represent many "firsts" for these particular nationalities. In some of these areas, for example,

in bilingualism, the outsized influence of Latinos reflects the outsized influence of the region as a whole.

This landscape is described below in a number of separate, yet interlocking, areas.

Advancement and Education:

After *de jure* segregation of public schools was successfully challenged by Latinos in the West and Southwest and African-Americans in the South the next effort of forcing public school systems to address the unique needs of Latino students centered on their language attributes. Native language instruction was championed by Mexican-Americans in the Southwest and Puerto Ricans in the Northeast (Jiménez; Castellanos). By 1968 Mexican-Americans led this charge by forging enough political clout in response to educational deficiencies in Arizona and Texas to force the passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968. Neither that act nor the only U.S. Supreme Court pronouncement on the matter (*Lau v. Nichols*), nor Congress' codification of *Lau* (Equal Education Opportunities Act), ever mandated instruction in Spanish; instead they concluded that an equal educational opportunity can never be realized without taking some action to overcome language barriers. For Mexican-Americans in Raymondville, Texas and for Puerto Ricans in New York City that solution was bilingual education (*Castañeda v. Pickard;* Castellanos). The legal framework to ensure this equal educational opportunity did first play out in the Southwest but Puerto Rican migration to New York City and the urban enclaves of the Northeast dominated many of the nation's largest public education systems and as such, their gains in bilingual education programming were influential on a national level.

For example, from 1965 to 1969 only four Puerto Ricans graduated from Boston's public high schools in the middle of a dropout crisis. The innovative law and policy response in Massachusetts was the first state law in the country to mandate transitional bilingual education in 1971 (Castellanos). The next year, Puerto Ricans in New York City filed and soon settled *Aspira v.*

Board of Education creating bilingual instruction in the country's largest school system that was over a fifth Puerto Rican and with a corresponding dropout rate of 85% (Castellanos). Within years New Jersey (1975) and Connecticut (1977) passed laws mandating bilingual education. Dropout rates declined and an entire unionized, mostly Latino, teaching force emerged in the country. Bilingual education is not without controversy as it represents a target for English Only forces even in New York City. One case in Bushwick Brooklyn unsuccessfully challenged the length of bilingual programs but it appeared to be the product of conservative language restrictionist forces, dissatisfaction with schools in general, and, more importantly, the lack of an organized Latino infrastructure to continue the support of bilingual and bicultural education (Del Valle).

Full equal educational opportunity continues to be elusive for all Latino school children regardless of region in large part because the battle to equalize adequate school funding, which started at the federal constitutional level then pivoted to the state constitutional level, never truly materialized (See, e.g., *San Antonio v. Rodriguez; Abbott v. Burke).* Despite this critical failure, the largest issues facing Latino school children in the Northeast gyrate around racially and economically segregated and isolated schools, business models of school administration that place a premium on high-stakes testing, and the detachment of schools from certain Latino immigrant groups in the region.

De jure segregation of our public schools is a throwback to our racist past but the institutional racism that continues to define our public institutions marginalizes Latino students in schools that are increasingly more racially and economically segregated. From 2000 to 2013 the proportion of public schools that are both racially segregated (between 75 to 100% black and Latino) and simultaneously economically segregated (between 75 to 100% eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) grew to 16% nationally from 9% and the number of students in these

schools nearly doubled and now surpasses 8 million. (U.S. Government Accountability Office). These schools offer less science, math and college preparatory courses and are more likely to hold 9th graders back or suspend or expel them. Worse yet for Latino students, their share of enrollment in these schools *increased* to 58% while the proportion of African-American students *decreased* to 34% in this period. The GAO report concludes that Latino students are "triply segregated" by race, income and language. New York City, the nation's largest school district has some of the highest rates of racial and economic isolation in the country. It's Independent Budget Office in 2010 concluded that students eligible for free or reduced meals do well in schools with relatively less poor students and students who don't qualify do less well if in schools predominated by those who do (Holzman). Worse still is the level of inexperienced teachers in these schools, "teachers who are expected to perform miracles are paid the least" notes one study (Holzman, 11).

Urban education's response to failing schools in large part reflects market choice models from the private sector with little evidence that those models work on public institutions that are required to address the educational needs of all students. This approach was spearheaded in the Northeast in New York City under the leadership of Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Once again given the inordinate media attention paid to New York City, reforms what started out as innovative market sector strategies have yet to bear fruit in public schools. For the Bloomberg administration education reform became a pillar of its political survival leading to his reelection after convincing the State to deposit all authority and accountability in the mayor's office. This business model uses the metrics of high-stakes testing for accountability; decentralizes administration to foster school autonomy; proliferates charter schools; and aggressively closes failing schools (Herrera & Noguera). Immediate results looked promising as test scores rose among all groups and soon the Bloomberg experiment led to a national award as the best urban

school district in the country. Unfortunately, the bottom of the high stakes testing fell out when the New York State Board of Regents concluded that its graduation exam scores were inflated requiring a recalibration that wiped out all the gains the business model promoted. For some researchers the writing was on the wall earlier when the City University of New York reported that half of high school grads from the city in four year colleges and a full 80% at two-year colleges were forced to take remedial courses to make up for the deficiencies in the city's public school system (Herrera & Noguera). These problems resonate among the city's Latino communities as a full 40% of all New York City public school children are Latino, the majority U.S. born and, in rank order, Dominican, Puerto Rican and Mexican (Treschan & Mehrotra).

The detachment from public schools of some of the region's most recent immigrants portends another challenge for the collective Latino community in the Northeast. Research into New York City's disconnected youth by the Community Service Society heralded this problem in detail (Treschan). At the time of its publication the initial conclusions that Puerto Rican youth aged 16 to 24 had the highest rates of disconnection (neither in school nor in the labor market nor looking for work) received considerable media attention. Another telling finding from the study concerns the city's Mexican population now numbering close to 500,000 (Smith). Mexican youth had the highest labor participation rates but significantly lower enrollment in public education or training (Treschan, pp. 7-8); effectively they came to the Northeast to work. Subsequent research indicated that this disassociation from education was trending over time with over 40% of Mexicans born in Mexico and between 16 and 19 years old, not in school in New York City (Treschan & Mehrotra).

Despite these educational challenges higher education rates for three of the major Latino groups are promising. Puerto Ricans, Ecuadorans and especially Dominicans obtain bachelor's degrees at rates higher than the Latino average for all groups (Pew). Cubans, a smaller

proportion of all Latinos in the Northeast but with a historic attachment to the region also have higher rates of college degrees than the average. For Mexicans in the Northeast the pattern of disconnection from public schools in New York City, noted above, is also reflected in the level of college degrees. On the whole Mexicans obtain college degrees at rates less than the Latino average (Pew).

Advancement and Political Participation:

The Northeast is the home of significant historical milestones in the political history of each of its dominant Latino nationalities. The first Latino elected official in New York or the Northeast was Puerto Rican – Oscar Garcia Rivera elected in 1937 to the state assembly on the Republican and American Labor Party line – as was the first Puerto Rican congressman ever elected from New York or the Northeast, Herman Badillo in 1971. The first Latino mayor of any capitol in New England was Hartford's Eddie Perez, Puerto Rican, in 2001 in a state that elected its first Latina or Puerto Rican woman to office, a bilingual education activist in 1988, Maria Sanchez. The first Latino ever elected to public office in Pennsylvania was Puerto Rican, German Quiles, elected from Philadelphia to the state house in 1969. The first Latino ever elected in Massachusetts was Puerto Rican, Nelson Merced, elected to the General Court in 1989. The first Latino U.S. Senator elected anywhere in the Northeast was Cuban-American, Robert Menendez in 2006 representing New Jersey. The Northeast is also home to all political "firsts" in the Dominican-American community: Guillermo Linares and Kay Palacios elected in 1991 to the city councils of New York and Englewood Cliffs, NJ, respectively, were the first Dominicans elected in the country. In 2016 Adriano Espaillat, of New York City, became the first Dominican elected to the U.S. Congress and its first formerly undocumented immigrant. After helping to create a Rhode Island Latino Political Action Committee in 1998 Dominicans reaped the benefits by electing the first Latino ever in the state, Juan Pichardo to the state senate

in 2003, the first Dominican woman elected anywhere in the country, Grace Diaz to the state house in 2005, and the mayor of its capitol, Providence, in 2011 with Angel Taveras. For the Ecuadoran community the first ever member of its community to be elected in the country is an Assemblyman from Queens, Francisco Moya who won his seat in 2010.

These milestones reflect incredible fortitude from these community leaders as well as their skill in maneuvering the local political machinery, but to fully appreciate the advancement of the Latino community writ large, it is necessary to probe how the community itself transformed its struggle for civil rights into the protection of voting rights. Central to that analysis is the development and implementation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its amendments where the Puerto Rican experience in the Northeast played a primary role. In short, Puerto Ricans led the way in securing what is often taken for granted today: the elimination of English-only election structures and the establishment of bilingual voting systems (Cartagena 2017). In the 1960s Puerto Ricans were using the law to attack New York's English literacy requirement for registering to vote. Litigation was unsuccessful (*Camacho v. Rogers*) so the community pressured elected officials in Washington at the time the famous Voting Rights Act was in development. The historic act was clearly passed to restore the dignity of African-American voters, but it was never exclusively black and white, not even in 1965 (Cartagena 2005). Section 4(e) of the act secured for the Puerto Rican community residing in the U.S. equal access to voter registration without the prerequisite of English literacy. Indeed, Section 4(e) exclusively secured "nondiscriminatory treatment by government" for Puerto Ricans as the U.S. Supreme Court noted in upholding its constitutionality (*Katzenbach v. Morgan*, 652). In short order this provision of the act was used in courts to force bilingual voter registration forms, signage, and interpreters at the polls and not just in New York but in the Northeast and Midwest benefitting over one million Puerto Rican voters (Culliton).

The creation of bilingual voting systems was never limited to Puerto Rican voters in these early cases. Once systems were created in Spanish all Spanish-dominant voters benefitted. Moreover, when Congress finally considered establishing access to the ballot for other language minorities in the 1975 amendments to the Voting Rights Act – in Spanish (to the benefit of Mexican-American voters primarily), Native American and Asian languages – it looked back to New York City and concluded that the "provision of bilingual materials is certainly not a radical step" precisely because it was firmly established in New York (U.S. House of Representatives 24-25). In short, establishing access to the voting booth, with all the attendant electoral victories for Latino-preferred candidates, is another example of the outsized influence that politics in the Northeast exerted for Latino communities nationally. It also reflects the unique circumstances that U.S. citizenship for Puerto Ricans played in the development of the law of nondiscrimination in the larger Latino community.

Despite these gains, challenges remain to the achieving full and effective civic participation within Latino communities of the Northeast. The biggest challenges are socioeconomic: voter registration and voter turnout are all correlated to income and educational attainment and this does not bode well for Puerto Rican, Dominican and Ecuadoran communities. The lack of public campaign financing continues to favor candidates who have access to capital and that is challenging for candidates from marginalized communities. Even the bilingual assistance guarantees of federal law are not fully implemented and often require federal oversight to ensure compliance (Cartagena 2008).

Moreover, effective civic engagement clearly means more than electing Latinas and Latinos in greater numbers. It also means securing policies and laws that are responsive to the needs of the Latino community. Two areas of major public debate, both controversial and

complex, involve policies that help integrate immigrant communities and policies that undo the effects of a broken and racialized criminal justice system.

Immigrant friendly policies include, but are not limited to, access to drivers licenses regardless of status, in-state tuition rates to attend public colleges and universities regardless of status, and access to state financial aid regardless of status. All three policies are targeted reforms by DREAM students under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program established in the Obama administration and, to date, still in effect in the new administration. A search of publicly available data online reveals mixed levels of success in the Northeast as compared to say, California. Vermont and Connecticut provide access to drivers licenses – the former is more a reflection of progressive politics since the state has a miniscule Latino population. In-state tuition is offered to DACA students in five states (NY, NJ, CT, MA, NH) plus Rhode Island which places conditions on it; in-state tuition is also offered to all other immigrants in three states (NY, NJ, CT plus RI with similar conditions). None of the nine states in the region offer access to state financial aid to all students regardless of status. Thus, innovation of responsive public policy in these areas is promising but still in development.

Criminal justice reforms present similar complexity in execution because of the stereotypes associated with persons accused of crime or serving time in a nation with an insatiable appetite for punishment. Nonetheless, the Northeast is home to a number of reforms in criminal justice and drug policy that occurred while Latinos were incorporated in government decision-making. Because of their relative lack of Latino residents we can put aside the outlier states of Vermont and Maine – the only two states in the country that do not engage in some form of felon disfranchisement, an area of activism that includes Latino prisoners front and center in litigation challenging the practice (Cartagena 2009). Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York have sensible laws that limit inquiries on previous criminal convictions during the

employment application process (Cartagena 2011). New Jersey is at the forefront of eliminating money bail in many cases – a victory secured through public referendum. Connecticut transitioned out of a punitive juvenile justice system by increasing the age of criminal responsibility. Marijuana is now legalized for recreational use in Maine and Massachusetts and its use is permissible for medical purposes in the remaining states in the Northeast (Governing). And all states in the Northeast have effectively rejected the death penalty (Death Penalty Information Center).

On the opposite end of criminal justice reform is a law and order agenda that is particularly harmful to all Latinos. Take, for example, New York's retributive insistence on categorically criminalizing 16 and 17 year olds as adults and placing the state in the company of only North Carolina as the only states that do so. Given the Latino share of youth in New York this vestige of an antiquated criminal code wreaks havoc on minors and their families. Similarly, marijuana – increasingly legalized at the state level, increasingly criminalized at the federal level – is at the crossroads of sane drug policy reform. For Latinos it continues to be symbolic of the worst aspects of a racialized and unfair criminal justice system. Drug possession is the fourth highest predicate that leads to deportation through 2016 (Human Rights Watch; Immigrant Defense Project). And in New York City, the drug arrest capital of the world, arrests for simple possession peaked as high as 50,000 per year in the Bloomberg administration and declined to less than 12,000 in the De Blasio administration only to creep up again (Rivlin-Nader). A full 85% of all persons charged with marijuana possession is either black or Latino. Equally pernicious is racial profiling, a characteristic of modern police monitoring despite the restrictions of a constitutional paradigm that demands the opposite: individualized suspicion. In New York, Police Commissioner Ray Kelly harassed blacks and Latinos by means of four million (!) stop-and-frisks, 88% of which ended without an arrest, citation or fine. In 2013 the culmination of

intersectional community activism by blacks, Latinos, Asians, Muslims and the LGBTQ community in the city led to a finding by federal judge Shira Scheindlin that was a concise rebuke of group-based profiling: "The Equal-Protection Clause does not permit race-based suspicion." (*Floyd v. City of New York*, 82). In East Haven, Connecticut, a pattern of criminal behavior involving false arrests, battery, and unlawful searches by corrupt local police resulting in their arrest and subsequent dismissal from the force led to institutional reforms in a major civil rights settlement in *Chacon v. East Haven Police Department* (Yale Law School News). No one summed up the dangers to our country of living in a state of constant suspicion and profiling than Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor in her dissent in *Utah v. Strieff* – "…it implies that you a not a citizen of a democracy but the subject of a carceral state just waiting to be catalogued." (*Utah v. Strieff*, 12). It is not surprising then that a poll of Latino leaders concludes that the criminal justice system "is racially biased, favoring non-Latino whites" (National Institute for Latino Policy 2015).

Advancement through Economic Participation

Latinos collectively are characterized nationally by lower socio-economic indicators than the national average and these patterns are indicative of Latino communities in the Northeast. As trends go, higher education attainment correlates with higher income. Labor force participation is usually very high among Latinos but this does not easily translate to higher income as employment for this sector is typically in dead-end or transient jobs. There are at least two distinguishing features of the region that warrant discussion. The first is the role of labor in the region – one that is markedly pro-union in nearly every one of the states. The second is the prevalence of small business generation which is a staple of immigrant and Latino communities generally, but particularly in the Dominican community.

The Northeast has a higher median rate of workers represented by unions than the national median – a sign that bodes well for entire working class regardless of race. A close look

at the Bureau of Labor Statistics on the federal level (U.S. Department of Labor) indicates that the median rate of workers represented by unions hovers at 11%. This figure is not synonymous with union membership as the debate over unionization versus Right-To-Work states is ongoing. But unionized positions still carry increased salaries and benefits for the most part. The corresponding median rate for the Northeastern states is 14%. Only New Hampshire is equal to the national rate (11%) while all other states exceed it: Connecticut 18%, Maine 14%, Massachusetts 13%, New Jersey 17%, New York 25%, Pennsylvania 13%, Rhode Island 17% and Vermont 13%. New York, home to the largest number of Latinos in the region is the outlier as a pro-union state. In fact, New York City is the nation's most unionized major city and in 2014-2015 Latinos there were unionized at 26% compared to 20% for white workers (Milkman & Luce). Rates of unionization within the Latino community turned on the length of migration to the city and not nationality with Puerto Rican workers unionized at 43%, Dominicans at 30%, Colombians at 29% and Mexicans at only 5%. Milkman and Luce also conclude that for unionized Latinos their hourly wages are much higher than Latinos who are not unionized – and their stake in the larger debate over unionization should be jealously protected accordingly. Strong unionization also has a positive effect on policies and laws that affect workers, on pro-worker candidates, and on inclusive election campaigns. This is the case throughout the region with the existence of pro-union political third parties, candidate endorsements, and strategic campaigning. Representative Nydia Velázquez first elected against a sitting Democrat incumbent from Brooklyn was successful in 1992 not only because of a favorable redistricting design for a second Latino congressional district but also because she secured the influential endorsement of the state's powerful hospital workers union, 1199.

Unionization of Latino workers is not without internal challenges to the labor movement, however, in part because job creation is a significant challenge in this region and in part because

of the perception that immigrant Latinos are taking jobs from American born citizens. Clearly there are historical trends that depressed local economies and even predated the larger influx of Latinos in the region. By the early 1980s Hartford and Willimantic Connecticut lost tens of thousands manufacturing jobs (Glasser). Unemployment among Puerto Ricans in Willimantic reached 28% at that time. Among Ecuadoran communities in New York, auto shop workers, close to 2,000 of them Latinos in 250 auto shops in Willets Point, Queens are threatened to be displaced by gentrification forces that favor large malls and big box retail than smaller business that are more labor-dependent (Castaño). The shift by some unions – especially those that organize lower-wage workers – is to see Latino workers as the primary source of new members. Campaigns like the Fight for $15 or efforts to organize "carwasheros" by unions like SEIU and others are efforts that are beneficial for Latino workers across the region. Other sectors of the economy open to Latino workers are closed off from collective bargaining by antiquated and unfair laws. The best example is New York State against its farmworkers. They are not allowed to engage in bargaining, are denied overtime and otherwise abused in a political environment where every year legislation to provide basic worker protections never passes the Republican controlled state senate.

Small business generation is a tried and true innovation to escape the hold of large employers both private and government. These income-generating efforts are common in all Latino communities with one estimate indicating that in 2012 Latino-owned businesses grew by 47% from 2007-2012 when overall business growth was only 0.7% (National Institute for Latino Policy 2012). Overall 85% of all new business formations in the U.S. were created by Latinos in the last five years and spending by Latinos in the country is at one and a half trillion dollars (National Institute for Latino Policy 2016). Dominicans in particular are excelling in this economic activity at present. From the *Asociación de Bodegueros Dominicanos* in Philadelphia to its

equivalent in New York City that includes over 7,000 *bodegas*, the reach into small business generation by this community extends from stores to nail salons, taxi companies, and larger supermarkets (Vázquez; Hernández & Torres-Saillant).

Nonetheless, persistent poverty remains in many of these communities: among the three Latino nationalities that live primarily in the Northeast, only Ecuadorans have a poverty rate less that the national average for all Latinos (19% vs. 25%) while Puerto Ricans (27%) and Dominicans (28%) have rates above the Latino average (Pew).

Asset accumulation via homeownership is another factor in economic advancement. The national average of homeownership for Latinos is driven by its largest subset – Mexican Americans who have a homeownership rate of 45% (Pew). Ecuadorans in the Northeast come closest at 39% followed right behind by Puerto Ricans at 38% and then Dominicans at 24%. With its larger share of Latinos in the region studies on the outmigration – away from New York City – of Puerto Ricans reveals some signs that address economic mobility (Torres & Marzán). Smaller percentages of out-migrants reach New England (10%) or Pennsylvania (14%) but those migrants possess markedly lower socio-economic indicators and much lower rates of homeownership in the receiving communities. This points to the gentrification of rental markets in New York City forcing Puerto Rican renters to look for other rentals in New England or Pennsylvania. The larger share of migrants from the Puerto Rican strongholds in the city actually went to the suburban ring of the city into northern New Jersey, Long Island and north and west of the city. The wave of out-migrants in the 1990s was decidedly better educated, had higher incomes and had rates of homeownership above 40% compared to 13% for those left behind. These studies all point towards the inability of Latino leaders to secure policies that would curb gentrification and displacement and that would sponsor new avenues toward homeownership and asset accumulation. Indeed, the housing foreclosure crisis hit Latino homeowners especially

hard and it appears that they have been unable to secure policies that would help them rebound from that crisis.

Homeownership reflects segregated housing patterns, which as noted above for schools, is clearly a dangerous trend for Latino communities. The structural discrimination that nurtures the redlining of public resources and access to capital is one form of exclusion against Latino renters and owners. The other is the persistence of employment discrimination against Latinos and the job segmentation that characterizes their integration into the government workforce. Compared to African-Americans, Latinos in general have a lower rate of incorporation into the government workforce than their numbers would dictate. Moreover, despite employment discrimination protections for the formerly incarcerated in place in a number of states in the region, the biggest job impediment is the criminal conviction itself. The stigma of criminality, real or perceived, is evident in the job market. Test cases in the New York City job market reveal that white applicants with felony convictions fare better than Latino or black candidates without them (Pager & Western). These additional forms of exclusion are obstacles to advancement through economic participation.

Advancement through Immigrant Integration

The Latino immigrant populations in the Latino community in the Northeast are characterized by high rates of foreign-born residents and strong attachments to their home countries in what has been described as transnationalism. Dominicans and Ecuadorans have foreign-born rates of 50% and 61% respectively when the national Latino average is 35% (Pew). Even the growing Mexican population in the Northeast is predominately foreign-born with rates over 66% in 200 and over 56% in 2010 in larger New York City metropolitan area (Bergad). By contrast, 70% of the Puerto Rican population, the bulk of which lives in the Northeast, is born in the 50 states.

Immigrant incorporation policies of access to higher education and driver's licenses, all important to immigrants of all ages, have been described above and are characteristic of a region that has yet to promote policies that will fully embrace immigrants. Municipal IDs which are both welcome and indispensable in Hartford, Connecticut, Newark, New Jersey and New York City, for example, are also inclusive policies that have taken root albeit in limited jurisdictions (Center of Popular Democracy). Another feature of inclusivity, especially in New York, is access to licenses for DACA certified immigrants. New York is the only state to date that establishes a clear path for the license to practice law for DACA immigrants as an exercise of its judicial branch's exclusive authority to determine the character and fitness of its lawyers (*In the Matter of the Application of Cesar Adrian Vargas*). The decision was issued without waiting for any state legislation, making it unique. That decision in 2015 led to the opening of other professional licenses regulated by the New York Board of Regents, such as teaching or physician assistant. In April 2016 the Board unanimously adopted the *Vargas* court's reasoning that residing in New York without legal status is not synonymous with a lack of moral character and opened up access to 53 licenses (Ramos).

Voting by noncitizens represents a key area of immigrant incorporation. Historically, noncitizens did vote in American in at least 22 states and territories up through the anti-immigrant policies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Hayduk & Wucker; Raskin). Tacoma Park, Maryland became the first municipality in decades to open the franchise to noncitizens in local elections in 1992 (Raskin). But long before that noncitizen voting was established in the Northeast with New York City allowing parental voting in community school board elections, including noncitizen parents, from 1970 to 2003 until community school boards were dissolved under Mayor Bloomberg. Cambridge and Amherst in Massachusetts both passed local laws to permit noncitizen voting but must obtain enabling legislation from the state to

implement them – and that has been pending for a while. It has been reported that the prime mover for noncitizen voting rights in Amherst has been Vladimir Morales, a Puerto Rican resident and member of the Town Assembly who has taken on the mantle (Hayduk). Noncitizen voting also reached ballot measures that were narrowly defeated in Burlington, Vermont and Portland, Maine. Additional efforts are pending in the Connecticut legislature and before the New York City Council.

One challenge to advancing Latino communities through immigrant integration policies concerns the vexing question of transnationalism. As noted above Dominicans and Ecuadorans have foreign-born rates that exceed the Latino national average. Additionally, Ecuador, Colombia and the Dominican Republic also recognized dual citizenship of their nationals which paves the way for increasing ties to the home country by way involvement with home country elections and political campaigns. For the smaller proportion of the national Cuban migration that resides in the New York City metropolitan area their strong transnational ties to events in their home country revolves around the overthrow of the Castro regime – thus they exhibit some of the features of transnationalism (Castillo-Montoya). Finally, Puerto Ricans do not forge transnational communities in the international sense because they do not cross formal borders but they are a transnational community because they move from one national and distinct culture to another (Duany 2002). For the purposes of Latino advancement and mobility in the region the larger question this poses is whether transnational ties impede advancement and incorporation however it is defined. The question is salient because unlike the largest segment of the Latino national demographic, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, the major Latino nationalities in the Northeast migrated to this part of the country with no previous ties to the land. This differentiates Mexican American settlements throughout the Southwest and the West where, as the saying goes, they didn't cross the border, the border crossed them.

Transnationalism has been described as spaces created by immigrants to maintain multiple social relations tying societies of origin and settlement and reconstituting these spaces across geographic boundaries – as such, the description would fit both Ecuadoran and Colombian communities in New York and New Jersey (Castaño). Other descriptions go beyond the broader terms of maintaining links or ties across borders of nation-states to ensure that the links or ties that immigrants maintain are sustained or intense as well as regular and recurrent (Vargas). On this score Vargas posits that maintaining transnational ties is not merely calling family in the home country or sending remittances or traveling there once a year, instead it is to do all of this frequently and intensely. On that score Vargas concludes that only 5% of Puerto Ricans are transnational while the majority exhibit forms of connectedness. One source of data that Vargas elevates is the Latino National Survey of 2006, a unique and unprecedented survey of over 8,600 people that is representative of 87% of the Latino population in the U.S. Using that data to measure cross border activities by Mexicans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans reveals significant ties to their respective home countries for all three groups but especially for Dominicans (Vargas, 20-23). For example, Dominicans have higher rates of contact with friends or family in their home country more than once per week; of visiting their home country more than once per year; of participating in clubs or associations in their home country; of paying close attention to politics in their home country; of voting in their home country; and of sending money to political candidates. Mexicans have higher rates of making remittances back home more than once a month. Puerto Ricans have higher rates of returning home to live, not just visit. And both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have equally higher rates of owning a home or a business in their home country than do Dominicans. This data underscores previous observations about both Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. Transnationalism has been virtually synonymous for Dominicans (Hernández & Torres-Saillant) a group that has exhibited these ties over several

decades of life in the U.S. (Duany 2008). On the other hand, "Puerto Rico has been thoroughly transnationalized through migration, circulation and other social processes" that given the cyclical nature of migration, the island is effectively "one point in an extensive migratory circuit" (Duany 2002).

Navigating these findings from anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists is an important factor in understanding the migration of Latinos throughout the country and particularly in the Northeast. Part of the reason is the narrow and often biased view of how today's immigrants (read: Latino) refuse to assimilate as presumably all previous waves of immigrants did. In the Northeast this concern was directed first at Puerto Ricans living in New York City who somehow did not meet these standards of assimilation. Edgar Melendez succinctly describes, in transnationalism terms, the work of Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan in the seminal, and now reconsidered, treatise of immigration patterns, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Melendez). Puerto Ricans in the city refused to learn English, to assimilate, to vote and to create strong organizational capacities were the principal findings by Glazer and Moynihan. They concluded that that could *only* be attributed to their deep ties to Puerto Rico. *Boricuas* were clearly an exception to traditional patterns of immigrant assimilation, the theory goes. Undoubtedly much of the same is probably said about Dominicans today. Or Colombians whose nationals send such a volume of remittances back to Colombia that it is the third largest recipient of remittances in Latin America. Or about Ecuadorans in the U.S. who vote intensely in the presidential elections in Ecuador and vote for their own representative in the Ecuadoran national legislature.

This decades-old literature says nothing about how race and ethnic bias played a direct role in reducing the acceptance of Latino immigrants and impeded their so-called assimilation. Or about the struggles by Puerto Ricans to undo a discriminatory English literacy test that impeded voter registration. Or about how U.S. policies never insisted that Puerto Ricans learn

English before they became U.S. citizens. But the past is also prologue. Assuredly, the comparisons between immigrant generations all beg the question of whether, say, Dominicans are so intensely involved in affairs in the Dominican Republic that they suffer from a transient mentality that impedes their political incorporation into this country. Or that Puerto Ricans living in the states who actively pressured the U.S. Navy to stop bombing Vieques, Puerto Rico are somehow disconnected from local or national U.S. politics because of that community activism. Melendez cites contemporary research by Adrian Pantoja that finds no incompatibility between transnational ties and U.S. political incorporation by Dominicans in the country. Duany, on the other hand, finds that the repetitive migration between the states and the island by Puerto Ricans is a salutary economic survival mechanism that does not contribute to poverty rates of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. (Duany 2002). At least for Puerto Ricans, transnationalism takes on a more robust resonance because of the sheer volume: there are now more Puerto Ricans in the 50 states than there are in Puerto Rico – a phenomenon that has no rival in other Latino communities.

Immigrant incorporation on the whole in the Northeast has admittedly a lot more to accomplish when compared to policies in other states that exhibit significant Latino political power. That is true, but the retention of significant ties to their home countries does not appear to be standing in the way of continuing the trajectory of political incorporation that Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Ecuadorans have accomplished to date.

Conclusion

This paper was designed to be descriptive, not comprehensive. Everyone who is Latina or Latino knows that there are marked differences between the national origin groups that are collectively labelled as Latino, Hispanic or Latinx (as there are welcoming commonalities). But there are also differences in economies, public resources, and public will toward inclusiveness and

equality in the major regions of the U.S. Those differences will inform an understanding of the migrant/immigrant life of the region's residents.

Much more remains to be said about how Latino mobility and advancement in this region differs from others. Little has been raised in this paper, given space limitations, about the intersectionality of Latino activism and growth with that of the African-American community in the Northeast. Racial violence and intolerance against emerging communities from both sectors is a common thread. Six members of the same family of Puerto Ricans were killed in a house bombing when their white neighbors in Philadelphia did not want them as neighbors, for example (Gonzalez 1977). Militant activism in the form of the Black Panthers and the Young Lords arose at around the same time and for similar reasons. Race riots in both black and Puerto Rican communities – where the bulk of Latino riots occurred (Fountain) – created common ground for future activism. And the *Afro-Latinidad* of Puerto Rican, Cubans, Dominican, and Colombian migrants (Jiménez Román & Flores) would assuredly lead to intersectional collaborations both in the 60s and 70s as well as today. Those strands of research and discussion are reserved for another time.

In the meantime, this regional focus on Latino advancement is directly tied to the composition of Latino residents of the region. Their dreams, their work, and their vision. While small in number and in Latino national origin diversity, Latinos in the Northeast have left an indelible mark on Latino national consciousness.

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