JORELL A.
MELÉNDEZ-
BADILLO

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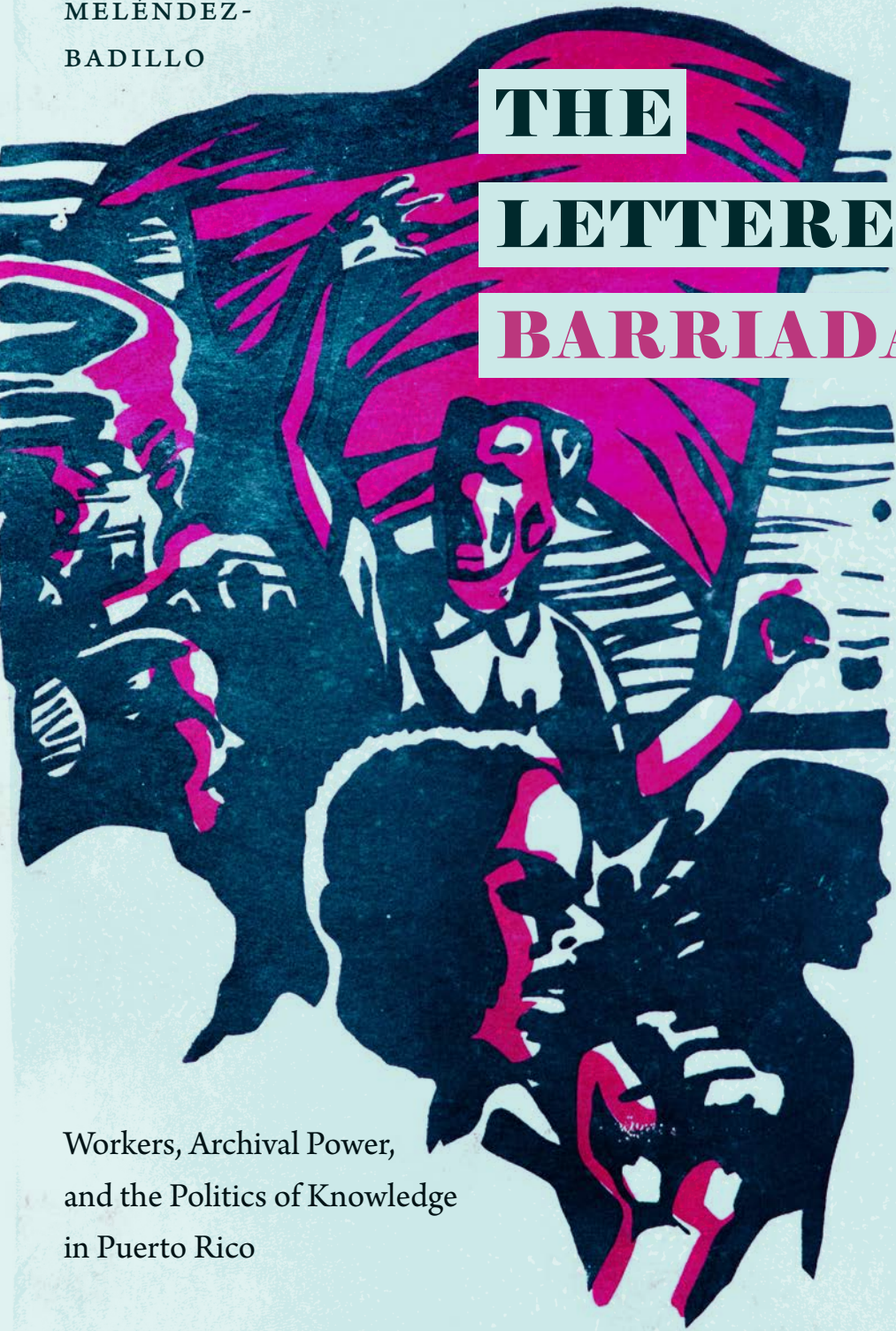

Workers, Archival Power,
and the Politics of Knowledge
in Puerto Rico

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JORELL A. MELÉNDEZ-BADILLO

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Para abuela Ada y abuelo Carlos,
esto es fruto de su cosecha.

Para Aurora y Libertad,
mis fuentes de inspiración.

Para mis madres,
Iris y Robin.

Para todxs mis maestrxs,
en el salón de clases,
en la calle o en el texto.

Para quienes no aparecen
en este libro.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On a warm May afternoon in 2014, my family came together at the home of one my great-aunts in Moca, Puerto Rico. Since my *abuela* (grandmother) had fourteen siblings, growing up with my grandparents meant that family celebrations were massive. I had just come back from finishing my first year of doctoral studies in the United States. Suddenly, I found myself in the balcony surrounded by all the men. They were trying to figure out what I was doing *allá 'fuera* (abroad). "What? A doctor? In history? Ha!" Struggling with my words, I tried to explain that I was a historian, which meant that I was trying to write stories just like the ones they had told me on multiple occasions about long shifts in tobacco factories, about train rides in search of work, or about the blistering sun in the sugarcane fields.

I was finishing an article about an agricultural strike that took place in 1905 and told them all about it. They attentively listened until my great-uncle Guilo interrupted me and said, "Strikes? Papá [my great grandfather] was an expert. He was called every time there was one. Papá was a *rompe huelga* [scab]." When I asked him to clarify what he meant, he just replied with a smile, "Of course, Papá would travel throughout the island on the train. Whenever a strike broke out, that meant he had work." And right there, on that balcony, my conception of history was profoundly altered. I had spent years doing research about the most radical segments of the Puerto Rican working classes, written a book on anarchism, and dedicated countless hours to the study of strikes. While I had taken an interest in

these topics because of my working-class background, I had failed to understand that my family were those on the other side, the ones anarchists and striking workers fought against, the *rompe huelgas*.

Hearing my great-uncle was a lesson about the multiple protean identities that people like them often negotiated. Learning about Papá's scab days did not make his stories about labor migration, exclusions, and exploitation less real. In fact, it added another layer to the already complicated histories that had been passed down to me by my great-aunts and great-uncles. On that day, I also understood that I wanted to write a history that was attentive to how identities were forged, negotiated, and mobilized at different historical moments. To be sure, the people that inhabit this book had access to things my family lacked: unions, self-managed pedagogical projects, and, eventually, political power. I came to understand these complexities, not by reading hundreds of books—which I did read—but through conversations like the ones that took place in that balcony. My family also taught me about the importance of community. Thus, I consider the production of history to be a collective endeavor.

This book was first conceptualized in that balcony with my family in Moca, Puerto Rico. It was written in between Storrs, Connecticut; Amherst, Massachusetts; and Hanover, New Hampshire. I finished it in another balcony, this time overlooking the Atlantic Ocean in Manatí, Puerto Rico. In the journey of transforming an idea into a book, I have inherited many debts that I will never get to fully repay. I have been very privileged to share conversations, laughs, and ideas with many colleagues and friends on different continents. In that sense, this book is my young self's wildest dream. It is a tribute to the people from the La Charca neighborhood, where my family comes from; the housing project Las Muñecas, where I spent the first years of my life; and the barriada Cabán, where I came of age. It is a tribute to all those—like my family—who remain unnamed and absent in history books.

At the University of Connecticut, a community of scholars and colleagues were crucial in conceptualizing the first drafts of this work. I am grateful to Matt Guariglia, Shaine Scarminach, Nathan Braccio, Eddie Guimont, Jessica Strom, Danielle Dumaine, Matt Perse, Erica Willis, Marc Reyes, Maggie Stack, Gabrielle Westcott, Aimee Loiselle, Mike Limberg, Allison Horrocks, Carla Silva Muhammad, Andrea Chunga, and Yesha Doshi. My time in cold Storrs, Connecticut, was made bearable by the warmth of Carlos Gardeazábal, Fatima K. Espinoza, Orlando Deavila, Claudio Daflon, Tania Torres, Gabriel Martínez, Marianna Todd, Ilán Sánchez, Luisa Arrieta,

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INTRODUCTION

Every morning at the break of dawn, vendors flocked to Arecibo's *plazuela del mercado* (market square) hoping to sell some of their goods, produce, or livestock. Even before the plazuela's daily hustle and bustle began, the smell of coffee filled the air as Nemesio Morales opened his *cafetín* (small café) to the public. There, customers could enjoy a cup of coffee, order breakfast, or have lunch. Cafetines were also places where people came together to gossip about events in their neighborhoods, engage in debates about politics, or simply buy their newspapers. In December 1910, Nemesio's patrons were exposed to a recently published daily newspaper called *El combate* (The combat), dedicated, according to its subtitle, to dignifying labor.[1] Anyone that came into the cafetín and glanced at the newspaper's masthead could easily perceive its rhetoric. Besides its socialist grandiloquence and its confrontational tone, the paper's header portrayed labor as honorable and presented education as an instrument to achieve dignity and freedom.[2]

When asked by his clients about the newspaper, Nemesio might have answered that he did not know much but that it was the product of three young idealists from the Federación Libre de Trabajadores (FLT; Free Federation of Workingmen) guided by Esteban Padilla.[3] People might have recognized Padilla's name because of his activism. After all, he was one of organized labor's most vocal advocates in the northern town of Arecibo. *El combate* had a short life of six months. In one article, its editors criticized the town's mayor, causing an uproar in Arecibo's political establishment.

The mayor sued the paper for libel, and Padilla took the blame. He spent a few days imprisoned until he sent a letter to the mayor asking for forgiveness. At a time when the lines between public and private life were often blurry, Padilla's arrest or his involvement in the creation of Arecibo's Partido Obrero Insular (Insular Labor Party) might have put his name in the townspeople's mouths.[4]

Those of Nemesio's patrons who disagreed with *El combate*'s radical rhetoric but still flipped through its pages could at least find some usefulness in its announcements of cultural events taking place in Arecibo, or in the news section, which covered all of Puerto Rico and beyond. Some might have been puzzled as to how these three workingmen were able to document events taking place in faraway places, such as Sweden, Spain, and the United States. Beyond its fiery political rhetoric, the workingmen behind *El combate* also carved a space to experiment with their literary sensibilities by publishing poems, short essays, and philosophical commentaries. And while unfamiliar readers might have found these intellectual pursuits odd, *El combate* was hardly an exception.

By 1910, *El combate* was one in dozens of labor newspapers published throughout Puerto Rico.[5] Different forms of print media (including books, pamphlets, and single-page leaflets) allowed a small group of self-educated workingmen to produce knowledge and ideas in the margins of Puerto Rico's cultural elite. At a moment when workers started organizing unions and venturing into partisan politics, a handful of people that self-identified as *obreros ilustrados* (enlightened workingmen) crafted a makeshift intellectual community, which I refer to as the lettered *barriada*. Physical barriadas were poor neighborhoods usually interconnected by a system of alleys that allowed people to move from one place to another. These narrow passageways between houses were less streets than trails made with asphalt, stones, or dirt. Resembling the veins of a cardiovascular system, alleys were also added on the go as housing structures were built, creating spatial unity among the barriada dwellers. The lettered barriada came alive through the nexus of literary production and print culture, political participation, and labor rituals that reconfigured social and physical spaces. Newspapers became its alleyways, books became its houses, and social study centers were its public plazas.

The Lettered Barriada tells the story of how a cluster of self-educated workingmen were able to go from producing knowledge within their workshops and labor unions in the margins of Puerto Rico's cultural and intellectual elite to becoming highly respected politicians and statesmen. It is a story of how this group of workingmen produced, negotiated, and archived

powerful discourses that ended up shaping Puerto Rico's national mythology. By following a group of ragtag intellectuals, this book demonstrates how techniques of racial and gender silencing, ghosting, and erasure also took place in the margins. Ultimately, it is a book about the intersections of politics, knowledge, and power relations in Puerto Rican working-class intellectual production at the turn of the twentieth century.

WHAT OTHER NEWSPAPERS were sold at Nemesio Morales's cafetín? Would *El combate* sit next to national papers like *La correspondencia de Puerto Rico* (Puerto Rico's correspondence), or were there other working-class newspapers being sold? Would people actually buy *El combate*, or would Esteban Padilla collect a packet of unsold newspapers at the end of every week? Since we lack the sources to answer these questions, we must resort to the realm of speculation and imagination. Some questions posed in this book will remain unanswered because they did not fit any of the competing archives that generated what we have inherited as historical knowledge. By "archive," I am referring not only to physical repositories of documents but, following historian Antoinette Burton, to any "traces of the past that are collected either intentionally or haphazardly as 'evidence.'"[6]

Puerto Rican workingmen did create material archives by housing their institutional documents in union venues and locales. They built a decentralized national network of makeshift libraries, night schools, and social study centers that stored books, newspapers, and photographs. Obreros ilustrados also participated in the creation of nonmaterial archives that came to life through the print word and that I refer to as "ideational archives." The nature of these archives was twofold. On the one hand, they came alive through print media and workers' intellectual production. On the other, the discourses and narratives produced in their pages acquired power beyond the text and often operated autonomously. While I am attentive to the materiality of working-class archives, I am also interested in unpacking the ways in which particular historical narratives and discourses operated as archives in themselves—archives of particular desires, ideas, and political projects.

Workers' ideational archives were not created in a vacuum. In the late nineteenth century—as literary scholar Lorgia García Peña argued in relation to the Dominican Republic—Puerto Rican liberals built the "archive of *puertorriqueñidad* (Puerto Ricanness)" through "historical documents, literary texts, monuments, and cultural representations sustaining national ideology."[7] Beyond the hegemonic national archive, minor ones served the structure and logic of the archive of puertorriqueñidad; that is, in early

twentieth-century Puerto Rico, multiple competing archives operated simultaneously. Each archive sought to establish its own "truth" to shape "history." After all, "the archive," as philosopher Michel Foucault argued, "is the first law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events."[8]

There were also "counterarchives" that challenged such logic and oftentimes were silenced from the historical record by those that controlled the modes of working-class knowledge production. One such case was the feminist counterarchive created by the anarchist Luisa Capetillo, who stormed the male-dominated lettered barriada with the publication of various books and newspapers. Perhaps more radical were the counterarchives created by the Black laundress Paca Escabí or the Black illiterate labor organizer Juana Colón (further discussed in chapter 3). While paying attention to multiple archives, *The Lettered Barriada* focuses on the archive—both physical and ideational—created by the FLT and the Socialist Party because it acquired hegemonic dimensions within working-class history. These organizations had the financial, material, and intellectual resources to create long-term editorial projects, publish books, and create physical repositories.

This book began as an attempt to find the voices of those people like my family—my great-grandparents, grandparents, and great-aunts and great-uncles—who were not unionized, did not aspire to become modern or "civilized," and might have even opposed unions. Since I was not able to find them in the historical record, I began to pay attention to a question that ended up guiding this book's narrative: *why* were they absent? Following Michel-Rolph Trouillot's argument that archives are neither neutral nor natural, and that silences are always actively produced, added another layer: *how* were they silenced? Seeking to answer these questions, this book explores obreros ilustrados' worldviews but also takes into consideration how they became historical narrators.

Because obreros ilustrados eventually dominated the means of working-class knowledge production through their leadership positions within Puerto Rico's premier labor organizations, the narratives they created have oftentimes been equated with history itself.[9] That is, obreros ilustrados got to dictate what was deemed important enough to become history. In the process, and to be legible in the archive of puertorriqueñidad—an archive crossed by centuries of colonialism, slavery, and imperial violence—they silenced those that did not fit their whitened and male idealized worker identity.[10] Thus, racial discourses, workingwomen, and nonunionized workingmen were rendered invisible. This was, as Trouillot argued, "archival

power at its strongest, the power to define what is and what is not a serious object of research and, therefore, of mention."[11]

NEMESIO MORALES'S CAFETÍN was located in Arecibo's plazuela del mercado, an important space for socializing. The plazuela was the town's commercial center. While people from the countryside could get copies of working-class newspapers only at labor-related events, city dwellers could buy them in specific stores, cafetines, or union venues. Indeed, the lettered barriada's physical space was undoubtedly urban, embodied in social study centers, printing houses, and union halls. Yet its social space was not geographically limited to Puerto Rico.

Let us imagine a workingman who had never traveled outside Puerto Rico or the northern region of Arecibo deciding to stop for a coffee at Nemesio Morales's cafetín. If he was one of the fortunate few who knew how to read, he could take a sip from his drink as his eyes flitted through *El combate*'s pages. There, he could read about massive mobilizations in Belgium or about the assassination of Catalan anarchist pedagogue Francisco Ferrer i Guardia. Perhaps he could feel connected to others who, in his mind, suffered the same oppression as his. Maybe, for a second, he could also imagine that he was part of a movement that transcended national borders. He could imagine himself as a global subject, all without ever leaving the cafetín.

The expansion of capitalism, new technologies, and travel routes made the turn of the twentieth century a heyday of labor's globalization. Since the 1860s, workers from around the world had made a concerted effort to connect with each other through international congresses, migration, correspondence, and the circulation of the labor press and other cultural products. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Puerto Rican obreros ilustrados became active participants in that global phenomenon. They read and published in international newspapers, celebrated labor rituals of remembrance like May Day, and established contacts with comrades in different countries. Through global interactions, they joined what one workingman described as "the concert of advanced nations."[12] That transnational subjectivity, or global sensibility, is an underlying theme throughout this book.

This does not mean, however, that the barriada was disconnected from broader political and social processes in Puerto Rico. It was created and developed in tension with the country's political and cultural establishments. During the first decade of the twentieth century, and as a new polity emerged after the US occupation and colonization of Puerto Rico, obreros

ilustrados used print media to craft protean identities that allowed them to establish proximity to the populace at times and distance at others—all while becoming workers' self-assigned interlocutors.

After the creation of the Socialist Party in 1915, obreros ilustrados moved to centralize working-class knowledge production with the aim of attracting workingmen to the ballot. By the 1930s, after the Socialist Party became an undeniable political force in Puerto Rico, many of those who had been in charge of producing knowledge and organizing labor unions had turned into career politicians. Meanwhile, as tensions within the party increased, and as a generational relay began to take place, it became imperative for aging labor leaders to write the movement's historical narratives. The publication of three books by the movement's most recognized leaders in the late 1920s and the 1930s (Santiago Iglesias Pantín, José Ferrer y Ferrer, and Rafael Alonso Torres) consolidated the ideational archive that began at the turn of the century and that would later shape historical production about Puerto Rico's working classes. To be sure, workers had been publishing books and pamphlets for decades, but these three books became foundational texts for Puerto Rican labor historiography.

The obreros ilustrados this book focuses on—a group mostly composed of urban and skilled workingmen—were also successful in crafting their political identities through their participation in the lettered barriada. They were deemed legitimate political subjects, as they occupied seats in Puerto Rico's senate and legislature. The cultural elite, however, saw workingmen's intellectual credibility as dubious at best. Nonetheless, at a moment when the labor movement had not been a serious object of academic study, these workingmen understood the power of crafting their own historical narratives. Those who published newspapers like *El combate* and distributed them in cafetines, on public corners, or at rallies perhaps never imagined the impact they would later have in Puerto Rican history and society. This book is the story of how that handful of ragtag intellectuals who stole time off their nights to study, debate, and educate other workers were able to successfully influence Puerto Rico's politics, national mythology, and, later, historical interpretations of the "Puerto Rican reality."

Conceptualizing the Lettered Barriada

Producing history is a collective effort. My work builds on and is indebted to scholars who pioneered working-class studies in Puerto Rico decades ago and have reimagined the field several times since. Under the name of

nueva historia (new history), in the 1970s a group of scholars set out to analyze what until then were understudied social sectors. Most of the other books and articles published about the labor movement were centered on the figure of Santiago Iglesias Pantín and reproduced the idea that he "created" the organized labor movement.[13] Influenced by trends in social history, this new generation of academics from the nueva historia was skeptical of grandiose historical narratives and sought to rewrite Puerto Rican history from below.[14] Since then, scholars of Puerto Rican labor have paid attention to workers' theatrical plays, literature, and social study centers as part of their class struggle, demonstrating that most literary and cultural production was created as organizing propaganda. Yet workers' cultural production also reveals the emergence of an intellectual project and community. Thus, looking at obreros ilustrados as part of that community allows a deeper understanding of the power relations among the working classes.[15]

In this book I use the concept of the lettered barriada in dialogue with a key text in Latin America's intellectual tradition, *La ciudad letrada* (*The Lettered City*), by the Uruguayan literary critic Ángel Rama. In *La ciudad letrada*, Rama mapped the urban dimensions of Latin American cultural production, the relationship between elite intellectuals and the state, and the centrality of reading and writing to the creation of urban (social and political) life. The workers that inhabited Puerto Rico's lettered barriada participated in similar processes but did so in the margins of the country's cultural and intellectual elite. These mostly self-educated workingmen used their makeshift libraries, improvised pedagogical projects, and public events to build the lettered barriada.[16]

Rama argued that in Latin America, "there were more real links between *letrados* [men of letters] and labor organizations at the turn of the century than in the 1930s (when such links became so central to left ideology)."[17] While this was true in some Latin American countries, as exemplified by thinkers like Manuel González Prada in Peru or Rafael Barrett in Paraguay, this was not the case in Puerto Rico. Both González Prada and Barrett were raised in wealthy families but later in life became militant anarchists, publishing several incendiary books and articles.[18] Intellectuals that came from the Puerto Rican professional classes sought to articulate a national project in the late nineteenth century and excluded workingmen from such conversations. I do not want to imply that it was a firm binary, but like any social process, interactions were porous at times. There were intellectuals, albeit few, that sympathized with the socialist program of the FLT, including Rafael López Landrón and Matienzo Cintrón, both lawyers.[19] Unlike

Rama's assertion, it was precisely in the 1920s and 1930s—after the Socialist Party facilitated the entrance of workingmen into Puerto Rico's political spheres—that the imaginary line between intellectuals and workingmen began to dissipate, but not entirely. By then, books written by working-class authors circulated more widely and ceased to resemble those rustic pamphlets produced within the lettered barriada at the turn of the twentieth century.

Similarly, Rama contended that a new *letrado* emerged in early twentieth-century Latin America and joined the ranks of professional writers. This new letrado, "usually from a lower class," lacked "contact with the most esteemed instruments of formal education" and "necessarily developed a less disciplined and systematic, but also more liberated, intellectual vision."[20] While the process of intellectual formation described by Rama resembled what Puerto Rican workingmen went through, they did not end up joining the rank of professional writers. Most people did not have the privilege of pondering the muses of leisure and had to dedicate most of their time to work. Many of the obreros ilustrados that I follow through the lettered barriada abandoned the workshop as they became full-time organizers and politicians, not writers.

The creation of makeshift intellectual communities in the margins of a country's cultural elite was not a process exclusive to Puerto Rico. If we understand the development of the lettered barriada as the convergence between print media, alternative social spaces, and political participation (broadly defined), then workers, radicals, and intellectuals across the Americas had been building their intellectual communities since the last decades of the nineteenth century. For example, ever since the 1860s, workers in Buenos Aires and Havana published dozens of newspapers and books; opened social study centers, rational schools, and bookstores; and sought representation in political processes from the war for independence in Cuba to the consolidation of academic disciplines in Argentina. Nonetheless, these processes were tied to the particularities of the historical moment in which they developed. This book explores how Puerto Rico's lettered barriada was forged in a Caribbean country at a colonial crossroads, from Spanish colonialism (1493–1898) to US imperialism (1898 to present day).[21]

In early twentieth-century Puerto Rico, access to the printed word, either through writing or reading, was a marker of social power and authority among the laboring masses. That is why Rama's formulation about the relation between letters and power is crucial to my conceptualization of Puerto Rican workers' intellectual production. Furthermore, understand-

ing the lettered barriada not only as a physical space, but also as a social one allows me to look at the transnational dimensions of local processes. While there has recently been a shift toward a transnational scope in Latin American labor and working-class histories, it has been rooted in the migration of peoples through national borders. In the following pages, I engage in conversation with recent literature on the topic, yet I shift the emphasis toward understanding how the circulation of ideas transformed the subjectivities of those who did not necessarily move outside Puerto Rico.[22]

In recent years, the field of Puerto Rican labor history has also moved toward much needed nuanced analyses of gender and race, which have added different interpretations to the previous class-based studies.[23] As Ileana Rodríguez-Silva has argued, the silencing of race was crucial for the making of class and nation building in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Puerto Rico.[24] When nineteenth-century liberals began to discursively articulate the Puerto Rican nation, workingmen were racialized and feminized, and thus excluded from those imaginaries. Instead of challenging these discourses, the nascent labor movement and its cadre of intellectuals reproduced them in their writings, cultural production, and historical narratives. In the process, they enacted many layers of exclusion and silencing. Workingwomen also actively participated in the organized world of labor since its beginnings. When obreros ilustrados wrote their histories of the movement, however, workingwomen were largely absent. Obreros ilustrados erased not only workingwomen but femininity in itself, as well as blackness.

The exclusion of blackness was not necessarily tied to Black bodies, as some were allowed participation in different echelons of the labor organizations these workingmen created. Yet they were allowed only if they practiced a de-Africanized and "respectable" form of blackness. That is, they were allowed participation if they aspired to become "civilized" and "modern," if they aimed to become whitened. The obreros ilustrados affiliated to the FLT and the Socialist Party sought to silence the histories of those who partook in practices racialized as Black and thus coded by the elites as backward, foreign, and uncivilized. These exclusions were not deviances but integral to the creation of labor's ideational archive and still operate with great transhistorical power in present-day Puerto Rico.[25]

Lastly, this book takes into consideration the significant role the geopolitics of knowledge play in how research questions are articulated. Although there are outstanding exceptions, oftentimes works produced in Puerto Rico are not in dialogue with those published in the United States, and vice versa. By paying attention to both historiographical strands, this

book engages in conversations happening not only within Puerto Rico and the United States but also in the Caribbean and Latin America. As literary scholar Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones has argued, Puerto Rico is often overlooked by the institutional knowledge produced in North American universities. Since it is neither Latin America nor the United States, it ends up disappearing.[26]

Recognizing such dichotomy, this book situates Puerto Rican working-class knowledge production within the Caribbean and Latin America but also pays attention to the US empire's regional power at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the lettered barriada emerged in the early years of US colonialism in Puerto Rico, in the following pages I resist the urge to make colonialism or empire the book's central analytical axis. Several scholars have done an excellent job exploring how imperialism and empire operated in Puerto Rico and how they shaped policies toward education, sexuality, and labor.[27] By not centering empire or colonialism, I am not negating the archipelago's colonial condition, which is still sustained with great transhistorical violence as I write these words.[28]

This book explores the complexities and contradictions of obreros ilustrados' ideational worlds beyond their opinions about the island's political status. It seeks to move away from a binary logic of "resistance or integration" that obscures other political processes, desires, and sociabilities. In fact, there's a nationalist-infused historiographical strand that has accused early twentieth-century socialists of being traitors or expounding "empty rhetoric of principles."[29] That binary logic not only downplays the agency of historical subjects, but also limits our analysis of what can be considered radical politics. As philosopher Jacques Rancière argued, "A worker that had never learned how to write and yet tried to compose verses to suit the taste of his times was perhaps more of a danger to the prevailing order than a worker who performed revolutionary songs."[30]

While it is true that the Socialist Party's leadership supported the annexation of Puerto Rico to the United States, this book aspires to think what it meant for self-educated workingmen—most of them also ex-convicts—to enter intellectual and political spaces that had been denied to them in the past.[31] Ultimately, the binary logic of "resistance or integration" also ignores the fact that colonialism and coloniality should not be solely defined by political status. The violence of these systems of power permeated (and still permeate) social relations, regimes of knowing, and often-indiscernible modes of societal control.[32] This book, then, pays attention to how the obreros ilustrados negotiated, challenged, and reified

those systems of colonial power through their praxis, discourses, and shifting positionalities.

Weaving the Barriada into Puerto Rico's Historical Fiber

The last three decades of the nineteenth century offered a whirlwind of changes for Puerto Ricans. Transformations in the Iberian Peninsula sent shockwaves through the Caribbean island, which had been a colonial possession of the Spanish empire for nearly four hundred years. After 1868, the crown was swayed by a series of revolutions that gave birth to a brief republican government in Spain and, later, a seemingly moderate reinstituted monarchy. In merely three years, from 1870 to 1873, Puerto Rico saw its first political parties, censorship eased away, and people could freely associate; slavery and the system of forced labor known as the *libreta de jornaleros* (laborer's notebook) were abolished; and new technologies that would alter agricultural production arrived at the scene.[33]

These transformations also refashioned Puerto Rico's societal fiber. Landowners (*hacendados*) and factory owners ranked highest in the country's social hierarchy. Meanwhile, toward the end of the nineteenth century, a new group composed of foreign-educated professionals (mostly lawyers and doctors) started to emerge. Both social groups had different political and ideological agendas. Their interactions were oftentimes porous, as they were connected through bonds of friendship and familial relations. Landowners wanted to implement a hegemonic project to control the island's polity and means of production while the new professional class aspired to set the foundations for a generalized national consciousness. Slavery produced such wealth that landowners could send their sons to study abroad in the United States and Europe's most important intellectual centers. Salvador Brau, one of the leading intellectuals among these professionals, noted that this young group was infused with modernizing and liberal ideas when they went to study abroad, only to arrive back to the island with the most fervent antislavery stances and political projects.[34] Other liberal thinkers, like Francisco del Valle Atiles, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, and José Julián Acosta, joined Brau in establishing the intellectual foundations of the imagined Puerto Rican nation and the archive of puertorriqueñidad.[35]

These professionals created a cross-class project that sought to include landowners, professionals, and workers. The "Great Puerto Rican Family" was to be used as a powerful discursive tool to unify the country. Attesting to its power, sociologist Carlos Alamo-Pastrana suggests that it still

operates nowadays "within the field of Puerto Rican studies, especially in literature, . . . as the major trope for framing the island's racial heterogeneity. The great Puerto Rican family (*la gran familia puertorriqueña*) discursively constructs Puerto Rico as a patriarchal, inclusive, and mestizo nation."[36] Although the Great Family aspired to civilize and modernize labor, workers were excluded from the conversations that created it.

After 1873, and following three years of conditioned liberty, freed formerly enslaved peoples entered the country's precarious labor market. Some became salaried workers in both agricultural and urban settings, while others used their previous labor experiences to become artisans and skilled workingmen.[37] Groups of urban workingmen started crafting their own cultural and societal projects, such as newspapers, mutual aid societies, and literary soirees. But, in a country that in 1899 had a total of 659,294 inhabitants over the age of ten and 328,850 who were unemployed and did not attend school, cultural projects were produced and enjoyed by few.[38] This gave way to the creation of several hierarchies within the laboring masses.

Ramón Romero Rosa, a printer and one of the most prolific writers among the early twentieth-century obreros ilustrados, wrote: "There was a time, very stupid for sure, in which what can be called a 'worker supremacy' (*supremacía obrera*) was established among the working class that attended [literary] soirees." He continued, "Printers, barbers, silversmiths, and people from other trades thought that the word 'workingman' was humiliating to their craft because they truly saw themselves as artists, organizing their racket centers which they called 'Artistic Casinos,' . . . denying access to bricklayers' assistants, non-skilled workingmen (*peones*), [and] dockworkers."[39] As Romero Rosa pointed out, workingmen were not a homogenous group. To the contrary, they created social hierarchies based on trade, remuneration, and access to cultural capital.[40] Even when excluded from Puerto Rico's cultural elite, those workingmen who had access to letters crafted an intellectual project that would seek to discursively unify workingmen from all trades. To do so, obreros ilustrados, most of whom were urban skilled workers, used print media, labor mobilizations, and cultural projects to create labor's historical narratives, collective aspirations, and masculine whitened identities.

On July 25, 1898, Puerto Rico was militarily occupied by the United States as part of the Spanish American–Filipino–Cuban–Puerto Rican War. Barely three months after the occupation—and three days after the US flag was officially hoisted in Puerto Rico—a group of workingmen created the archipelago's first labor federation, the Federación Regional de Trabajadores (FRT; Regional Federation of Workingmen) on October 23. Under its ban-

ner, workers held strikes throughout the island, published the newspaper *El porvenir social*, and organized the first public May Day celebration. The FRT leadership favored Puerto Rico's annexation to the United States. They believed that joining the northern nation would allow them to be protected by US laws. In their program, the FRT advocated for the eight-hour day, maternity leave, work safety laws, abolition of child labor, and the creation of public dining halls, as well as reforms in the educational system.[41]

Some FRT leaders also promoted the creation of a joint political strategy with the pro-statehood Republican Party.[42] A group steered by Ramón Romero Rosa, José Ferrer y Ferrer, and Santiago Iglesias Pantín, among others, fiercely opposed any political alliance. That dissident group created the FLT on June 18, 1899. In October of that year, members of the FLT also created the Partido Obrero Socialista (Socialist Labor Party). Santiago Iglesias Pantín was elected president and Ramón Romero Rosa, the party's secretary.[43] Nonetheless, military governor George W. Davis abolished universal male suffrage—established months before the US occupation—and did not allow the party's participation in the first local elections under US rule.[44] Two years later, in 1901, the FLT became affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.[45]

The people of Puerto Rico sought to make sense of the rapidly changing economic, social, and political landscapes. The US colonial government consolidated its control over Puerto Rico and paved the way for transnational corporations to dominate the island's two major exports: sugar and tobacco. The entrance of US capitalism also meant a sharp transformation in the modes of production, which materialized in different organizational structures within workshops. Cigarmakers, for example, went from being well-respected artisans who knew the "secrets of the trade" to replaceable units in a rapidly mechanizing system.[46]

The obreros ilustrados saw the moment as an opportunity, even amid their different approaches, ideologies, and political orientations. Using their newly created unions, they sought to leverage Puerto Rico's emerging polity. While some of them, such as Romero Rosa and Manuel F. Rojas, cautioned against colonialism, others, such as Santiago Iglesias Pantín and Jesús María Balsac, promoted the incorporation of Puerto Rico into the United States as a step toward becoming legitimate political actors. Seeking to strengthen their unions' political bonds, the obreros ilustrados created alliances with local politicians and US government officials.

The Foraker Act of 1900 allowed Puerto Ricans to vote for members of the local House of Delegates, while the US president appointed the governor

and his executive council. At times the governor and municipal authorities' relations were frail at best. For example, Manuel Egozcue Cintrón was the mayor of San Juan intermittently from 1900 to 1904. While in office, the mayor gave impunity to mobs that attacked anyone who opposed his Republican Party. Even when the FLT had cordial relations with the governor, and some labor leaders corresponded with high-ranking US officials, they were physically attacked and persecuted in the streets of San Juan by members of the mayor's political party.[47]

Throughout the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, the FLT sought to create an institutional identity that would allow its members to participate in the country's political, social, and intellectual life. To do so, labor leaders experimented with multiple short-lived political alliances that, even when not always effective, allowed labor leaders to articulate their demands in the political sphere. Furthermore, by 1905 the FRT became almost nonexistent beyond the San Juan area, allowing the FLT to project itself as Puerto Rico's leading labor federation.

With the FLT's growth also came attempts to centralize the diverse political visions and strategies within labor organizations. For example, Ramón Romero Rosa and four other FLT members participated in the 1904 elections through the Union Party ballot. The Union Party, which later became the Socialist Party's rival, represented the old landowning class and intellectuals, and was organized around patriotic lines in defense of the imagined Puerto Rican nation. All the FLT members who ran for the House of Delegates were elected. Yet the Unionists did not allow Santiago Iglesias Pantín, then president of the FLT, to participate in the elections. Enraged by his exclusion, Iglesias Pantín demanded that all elected FLT members resign from their political positions. When they refused, the elected workingmen were expelled from the labor federation. Romero Rosa had been one of Santiago Iglesias Pantín's most loyal defenders. He wrote Iglesias Pantín's first biography in 1901, elaborating what historian Gervasio L. García called the "Early Riser Myth," in which Iglesias Pantín was portrayed as the "creator" of the labor movement. Nonetheless, Romero Rosa became a persona non grata for refusing to follow Iglesias Pantín's orders.[48]

Around the same time, in 1905, Puerto Rico was rocked by a series of strikes in the northern and southern agricultural fields as well as in San Juan's docks. Since the FLT's beginnings, the organization had aspired to unionize the agricultural labor force, which was the country's overwhelming working majority. For labor leaders, the southern agricultural strike of

1905 gave hope of attaining such a possibility. Indeed, there were moments in which more than twenty thousand agricultural workingmen mobilized in joint actions throughout the region. Some of the striking workers' demands were met, but the FLT, which had invested most of its resources and money in the process, was severely weakened. As Andrés Rodríguez Vera, one of the FLT's harshest critics, argued, after the 1905 strikes the FLT was reduced to an office in San Juan. While that may have been an overstatement, the labor federation did struggle to maintain its numbers. After the strike, the FLT's numbers plummeted from 8,700 unionized workers in 1905 to 6,300 the following year.[49]

Labor leaders went from using strikes to attain their immediate goals toward a more conservative trade-unionist stance while also experimenting with municipal politics. The FLT's San Juan locale, led by Santiago Iglesias Pantín, created the Federación Libre Party and had little to no success. In the 1908 elections, for example, it barely gathered 1,326 votes, or 0.86 percent of all the ballots cast countrywide. Meanwhile, Esteban Padilla—who was one of the people behind the labor newspaper *El combate*—founded the Partido Obrero Insular (Insular Labor Party) in Arecibo. Despite its poor results in the 1908, 1910, and 1912 elections, the Partido Obrero Insular took everyone by surprise when it won the majority of votes in Arecibo during the 1914 elections. There had been a desire to enter the world of politics since the organized labor movement's early days, but it was this victory, along with a major strike that developed throughout the Puerto Rican countryside during the same year, that created the conditions for labor leaders to form the Socialist Party in 1915.[50]

Meanwhile, workingwomen fought to carve a space in the male-dominated labor organizations. They created several unions, from domestic unions, which served as umbrellas for women with different occupations, to trade-specific ones, like the Women Tobacco Stripper Union. The number of officially recognized workingwomen unions increased from nine in 1904 to thirty-five in 1909.[51] Their activism was not only labor related; they also generated broader social demands. For example, in 1908 workingwomen demanded universal suffrage in an FLT congress, something unprecedented that would not become a reality until 1935. When the Socialist Party was created in 1915, not a single woman occupied a position of power within its ranks.[52] By 1919, workingwomen played such a central role as organizers that the FLT and the Socialist Party sponsored the First Congress of Puerto Rican Workingwomen.[53] Nonetheless, they continued to be excluded from the party's leadership positions through the 1930s.

Although the Socialist Party was a distinct entity from the FLT, it was through the latter's unions that the party generated enough signatures to participate in the 1917 elections, the same year that the Jones Act granted US citizenship to Puerto Ricans. The party's program advocated land distribution; the creation and control over a Labor and Agricultural Department; a better educational system, with free food, clothing, and materials for children; eight-hour workdays; and the creation of *barriadas obreras* (working-class neighborhoods), among other progressive measures. The Union Party won every election from 1904 to 1924. Yet the Socialist Party quickly became a political powerhouse after its founding. In 1917, Socialists garnered 14 percent of the votes and won six municipalities. Likewise, in the following elections (1920), it attained 23.7 percent of the general vote, winning eight municipalities.[54] From 1924 onward, the Socialist presence in the political sphere was one of the reasons that traditional parties with different ideological orientations were forced to create alliances to win elections.[55] The Socialist Party was not exempt from this trend and created electoral partnerships with the Republican Party.

These political processes took place as Puerto Rico's economy was radically transformed during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The US occupation also created a "free trade zone," which prompted export activities in the sugar, tobacco, and needlework industries. Indeed, sugar production and tobacco manufacturing, practiced since Spanish colonial times, expanded greatly during these decades. Coffee production, on the other hand, plummeted. Needlework, which mostly employed workingwomen in factories or in their own houses, boomed after World War I, when the United States lost sources of embroidered cloth and drawn linen, such as France, Belgium, and Japan.[56]

These economic processes shaped and transformed Puerto Rico's social relations, spatial configurations, and intellectual spheres. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, a group of letrados started imagining how a process of modernization could look in Puerto Rico. After 1898, most of these letrados became members of the Union Party and articulated a patriotic discourse that resented US occupation while proposing independence or greater autonomy, as exemplified by intellectuals like Luis Muñoz Rivera, Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, and José de Diego. This literary generation was followed by the modernists, who, according to literary critic Rafael Bernabe and sociologist César Ayala, articulated three defining elements: openness to cosmopolitanism and modernizing influences,

an affirmation of Puerto Rican cultural identity and of its link with a Hispanic American cultural universe, and a challenge to US arrogance.[57]

A younger generation born after 1898, influenced by their readings of US, Latin American, and European literature, started articulating their aspirations and sensibilities. In the 1920s, avant-garde literature sought to break away from "older generations" and experimented with new literary forms and styles. People like Antonio Pedreira, Luis Muñoz Marín, Vicente Geigel Polanco, Pedro Albizu Campos, Juan Antonio Corretjer, and Luis Palés Matos were not only known within literary circles but would later become significant political actors throughout the twentieth century. The trends and literary developments of this newer generation owed much to the shift the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) had made from a teachers college to an institution of higher education.[58] From within the university, some of those intellectuals started to think of the Puerto Rican nation as a distinct cultural entity from the United States. Indeed, known as "the '30s generation," it is no exaggeration to say that they reimagined the Puerto Rican nation.[59]

These ideas about the nation were articulated in the 1930s as the country went, once again, through enormous economic and social transformations. The US government's New Deal program created a series of agencies through which technocrats sought to modernize Puerto Rico, such as the 1933 Puerto Rican Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA) and later the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration (PRRA) in 1935. Meanwhile, other marginal intellectual communities tied to specific political projects started to emerge.[60] The Nationalist Party abandoned electoral politics and became a militant movement; the Communist Party lured former Socialists into its ranks; and new labor organizations challenged the FLT's hegemony over the organized labor movement. These groups, organizations, and parties housed cadres of intellectuals who imagined the nation from vastly different positions. In this context, several splits within the Socialist Party and the FLT took place, and the newly created Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party) eventually became a hegemonic force in Puerto Rican politics.

This is the texture that weaved together the world navigated by obreros ilustrados during the first three decades of the twentieth century. As I demonstrate in the pages that follow, workingmen made their way into partisan politics but were not allowed into Puerto Rico's intellectual and literary spheres. Nonetheless, they created their own social and cultural spaces,

from which they imagined, theorized, and sought to transform their reality. Ultimately, this book is not a history of the FLT or the Puerto Rican working classes. It is the story of a small group of obreros ilustrados that used knowledge production to create a makeshift archive and intellectual community with its internal contradictions, global aspirations, and local exclusions.

The Creation of Workers' Intellectual Community

Understanding an intellectual community's historical development is a daunting and complicated endeavor. You must take into consideration many relations, practices, and individuals. Like culture, "if you are to understand the relationship between different practices," argued cultural theorist Stuart Hall, "you have to know something about economics, social history, literature, and so on."[61] To tackle such complexity, each chapter represents a different moment in the emergence of Puerto Rico's lettered barriada.

Chapter 1 explores the moment of creation. Through its pages I follow workers into evening meetings to discuss the creation of newspapers, trace the development of their first publications, and explore who these obreros ilustrados were. The chapter begins in 1897, with the publication of the newspaper *Ensayo obrero*, and analyzes the development of the lettered barriada in tune with the FLT's expansion as it became the island's most important labor federation. It also explores how obreros ilustrados used print media to establish proximity to the laboring masses at some moments and distance at others. Chapter 2 focuses on how obreros ilustrados imagined themselves as part of a global community at a moment when the labor movement was expanding and as some of its leaders ventured into politics. It explores the uses of print media and private correspondence to take part in international conversations that gave them cultural referents to theorize about their social conditions, struggles, and everyday lives. This imagined global labor community was deeply Eurocentric and allowed obreros ilustrados to locally articulate anti-Black narratives that silenced any race-based discourse.

Chapter 3 pays attention to the voices and the counterarchives of anonymous *obreras ilustradas* (enlightened workingwomen). While they did not create a literary corpus, workingwomen did pen their ideas in newspaper articles and spread them by speaking in *mítines* (public meetings). Thus, this chapter also problematizes the notion of who was considered a worker. To do so, I follow the labor organizing of Black laundress Paca Escabí and

the transnational activism of anarcho-feminist Luisa Capetillo, while also tracing the life of Juana Colón, a Black illiterate labor organizer from the town of Comerío. The story of Colón challenges obreros ilustrados' silencing power. Although she was consciously omitted from Comerío's history, the community remembered her through corner conversations, songs, and poems. Such acts of remembrance saved Juana Colón from the lingering penumbra of historical silence.

Chapter 4 analyzes the Socialist Party's establishment and how it became a moment of consolidation for the lettered barriada's political project. Like any institution, different political, intellectual, and cultural opinions coexisted within the party. The chapter explores how obreros ilustrados who held positions of power sought to promote a homogenous political agenda and to centralize working-class knowledge production. Further, it shows how most obreros ilustrados, who came out of workshops, later held powerful positions in San Juan and Washington, which granted access to spaces that had been denied to them in the past.

Historians and social scientists have meticulously explained how even though the Socialist Party attained electoral victories in 1932 and 1936, it suffered significant setbacks throughout the 1930s. The scholarship has paid attention to dissidence, the breach of trust between the rank and file and its leadership, and the rise of other progressive political parties.[62] Nonetheless, Puerto Rican labor scholars have overlooked the 1933 student strike at the UPR as a watershed moment for the Socialist Party. The strike, explored in depth in chapter 5, was the first of several major public blows that debilitated Puerto Rico's premier labor organizations throughout the rest of the decade, leading to the FLT's disappearance and the Socialist Party's electoral insignificance. The 1933 student strike took place at a moment when the UPR became the archipelago's leading center for intellectual production. Workingmen were considered legitimate politicians by the country's cultural elite, but, as the strike demonstrated, they were not deemed legitimate intellectuals.

As these processes were taking place in the late 1920s and 1930s, it became imperative for aging labor leaders to narrate their role in the movement's creation. Chapter 6 explores how three books became an ideational archive capable of reproducing the historical narratives created within the lettered barriada at the turn of the twentieth century. Ultimately, these books, written by some of the movement's most important leaders, became the barriada's discursive consolidation. Following Siraj Ahmed's argument about the intersections of print media and the historical method,

I argue that these "texts became vessels of historical knowledge only on the condition that their own historicity be rendered invisible."[63] Thus, this chapter not only analyzes these books as constitutive pieces of labor's ideational archive, but also understands each book as the product of specific historical moments. Doing so allows an exploration into how dominating the means of knowledge production became an important political tool as the FLT and the Socialist Party's hegemony over the organized labor movement began to shatter in the 1930s. The book's epilogue traces how some of the myths created by labor's ideational and material archives later became tools in the realm of mid-twentieth-century politics, nation building, and history making.

A Note on Language and Terminology

At the turn of the twentieth century, the neighborhoods of La Perla (figure I.1) and Puerta de Tierra, both located outside San Juan's fortified walls, were the quintessential archetypes of barriadas. Their houses and living quarters were frequently improvised and lacked the most basic sanitary infrastructure. Yet their affordability and location—a stone's throw away from the island's capital—made them ideal for those coming from all around Puerto Rico in search of work. Some artisans and urban skilled workingmen earned enough to live inside the enclosed city, but their housing conditions were not ideal either. Most lived precariously to the point that we can consider their damp and dusky apartments as extensions of the extramural barriada. Indeed, although barriadas existed in the margins of power, they were constituted in relation to it. In this book, barriadas are not merely physical spaces but also represent the social worlds its dwellers forged through print media, cultural products, and literary works.

Taking such complexities into consideration, how can we translate the term barriada without losing its many layers? Expressions such as "slum," "shanty town," or "poor working-class neighborhood" reproduce negative connotations that obscure the vibrant conversations, interactions, and desires of those that lived in them. Furthermore, barriada's multifaceted meaning embodies all the above-mentioned definitions. Barriadas were often overcrowded, making them slums. Their buildings were crude, improvised, and for the most part created from scraps. Its inhabitants were those who did not own anything and who worked for those who enjoyed European and later North American luxury furniture and architecture. In

FIGURE 1.1. Edwin Rosskam, *In the Workers' Quarter of La Perla, San Juan, Puerto Rico*, 1937. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

sum, barriadas were the homes of those in the bottom of the social hierarchy. Hoping to maintain some of these nuances, I use the term in Spanish.

Similarly, I use the phrase "obreros ilustrados" (enlightened workingmen) in Spanish when referring to those behind the creation of the intellectual community I call the lettered barriada. For these urban skilled workingmen who started producing knowledge at the beginning of the twentieth century, the word "intellectual" was associated with the upper classes and carried negative undertones. After the French Dreyfus Affair (1896–1906)—where a Jewish military officer was unfairly imprisoned, and a host of well-respected thinkers came to his defense, including, most famously, Émile Zola—the word "intellectual" acquired new currency throughout the Western world.[64] Not until the late 1910s did Puerto Rican

obreros ilustrados start using it without a negative connotation. Nonetheless, the term "intellectual" still maintained a class dimension. For obreros ilustrados, "intellectuals" were professionals who possessed higher education, not workers.

Workers' knowledge production was not only political and rooted in their class experiences but also revealed their literary, cultural, and self-making aspirations. It is up to the reader, then, to decide which is the noun and which is the adjective that best describes the subjects that populate the following pages. Were people like Romero Rosa, Ferrer y Ferrer, and Capetillo workers who were enlightened, or were they enlightened individuals who had to work? Using the phrase "obreros ilustrados," in Spanish, invites readers to arrive at their own conclusions.

Another word used in Spanish throughout the text is "mítines." Although it is an anglicism that roughly translates to "public meeting," it had a deeper meaning in early twentieth-century Puerto Rico. As I have noted elsewhere, "Mítines generally took place in spaces, such as empty lots, town plazas, or street corners. In the countryside they were organized in crossroads, in the patios of the peasant's humble huts or in wastelands."[65] Beyond their propagandistic nature, mítines were social events. "While the orator gave his or her speech, other workers handed out pamphlets, leaflets or newspapers. People interrupted speeches with applauses or by contradicting, challenging, or cursing at the speaker. Conversations, debates, and insults filled these spaces with vibrant life."[66] Hence, mítines were spaces where people came together to share ideas, construct knowledges, and forge collective identities.

One of this book's underlying arguments is that workingwomen were actively erased from the archives obreros ilustrados created. Attentive to such exclusions and erasures, I have decided to use the male "workingmen" when translating *trabajadores*, instead of the genderless "workers." It is very common to find "trabajadores" as a genderless noun in labor historiography, but that inevitably centers men. That is, using "workers" when referring to "workingmen" epistemically perpetuates the silencing processes I seek to untangle in the following pages.

For the obreros ilustrados that populate this book, knowledge production—from editing books and newspapers to writing poetry and theatrical plays—was a very serious affair. Attentive to obreros ilustrados' intellectual desires and aspirations, each section's subhead is accompanied by an epigraph from the working-class literary magazine *Luz y vida* (Light and life). One of the magazine's main editors was Rafael Alonso Torres,

who becomes a crucial character in the second part of this book. While his opponents accused him of being as ignorant as an ox, this subtle action of using his magazine's quotations throughout the book is a way of problematizing the delegitimization of workers' intellectual production.

I also capitalize "Black" when referring to people of African descent. I recognize that the use of capitalization is part of a broader debate in the US African diaspora, and I do not wish to impose imperial academic modes of thinking to the study of Puerto Rico. Using capitalization in the context of early twentieth-century Puerto Rico allows me to center and forefront blackness at a moment in which the archives this book explores sought to silence and erase it.[67] I also use Spanish words whenever I feel that their English translation does not encompass their full meaning, and I leave any book and newspaper title in its original language. Nonetheless, every Spanish word is followed by an English translation in the text. Lastly, this book understands Puerto Rico as a Caribbean and Latin American country colonized and occupied by the United States. Thus, I use the terms "country" and "nation" interchangeably to refer to Puerto Rico, unless otherwise noted. I hope the following pages serve as a map to navigate the lettered barriada. Let's start our journey through its alleys.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. *El combate* was sold for one cent in three different locations throughout Arecibo, and all were *cafetines*: Nemesio Morales's in the plazuela del mercado; Antero López's at Santa María Street, No. 2; and Don José Bonet's (father), located in La Puntilla. See *El combate*, December 19, 1910, 4.

2. Two phrases could be read in *El combate*'s masthead: "Labor Omnia Vincit," which was conveniently translated into Spanish as "El trabajo todo vence," and "Instrucción y Trabajo son las ruedas delanteras del Carro del Progreso que nos conducirá á la Libertad y a la Dicha" (Education and Labor are the front wheels of Progress's vehicle, and they will guide us toward Freedom and Happiness). See *El combate*, December 2, 1910.

3. Luis Guillermo Marín, Sebastián Siragusa de la Huerga, and Esteban Padilla edited the paper. See Limón de Arce, *Arecibo histórico*, 475, 486–87; Meléndez-Badillo, *Voces libertarias*, 124–25; and Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico*, 418.

4. Limón de Arce, *Arecibo histórico*, 487.

5. According to historian Antonio S. Pedreira, around five hundred newspaper titles were published from 1898 to 1912, and dozens were labor oriented; see Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico*, 363; and Meléndez-Badillo, *Voces libertarias*, 93, 110–28.

6. Burton, *Archive Stories*, 3.

7. García-Peña, *Borders of Dominicanidad*, 12.

8. Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 129.

9. That is still the case even with recent historiographical interventions. See Sanabria, *Puerto Rican Labor History*; and Rivera Caballero, *De lobos y corderos*.

10. Meléndez-Badillo, "Mateo and Juana."

11. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 99.

12. "Convención de tipógrafos," *Obrero libre*, June 14, 1903, 3.

13. A. J. González, "Apuntes para la historia del movimiento sindical"; Carreras, *Santiago Iglesias Pantín*; Senior, *Santiago Iglesias: Apóstol*.

14. See Lebrón, "Creación, control y disputas"; Castro Arroyo, "De Salvador Brau a la 'novísima historia'"; and Matos Rodríguez, "New Currents in Puerto Rican History."

15. Barcia, *Capas populares y modernidad en Cuba*.

16. See Rama, *La ciudad letrada*. For the English translation, see Rama, *Lettered City*.

17. Rama, *Lettered City*, 113.

18. Ward, *La anarquía inmanentista*; Etcheverri, *Rafael Barrett*.

19. For other examples of Black artisans, see Hoffnung-Garskoff, "To Abolish the Law of Castes."

20. Rama, *Lettered City*, 119.

21. Meléndez-Badillo, "Radical Genealogies"; Sueiro Seoane, "Anarquismo e independentismo cubano"; Geli, "Los anarquistas en el gabinete antropométrico."

22. Meléndez-Badillo, "Labor History's Transnational Turn."

23. Some examples include Baerga, "A la organización"; Findlay, *Imposing Decency*, 135–66; and Rodríguez-Silva, "Racial Silencing."

24. See Rodríguez-Silva, *Silencing Race*.

25. Godreau, *Scripts of Blackness*; Godreau, "Slippery Semantics"; Godreau, "Changing Space, Making Race"; Findlay, "Slipping and Sliding"; Arlene Torres, "La gran familia puertorriqueña"; Meléndez-Badillo, "Mateo and Juana."

26. Díaz-Quiñones, "Cultura, memoria y diáspora."

27. Some examples include del Moral, *Negotiating Empire*; Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*; and Levy, *Puerto Ricans in the Empire*.

28. I have published pieces about Puerto Rico's possible decolonial and anticolonial futures, the queering of protest, and radicalism in the contemporary moment. See Santiago-Ortiz and Meléndez-Badillo, "Puerto Rico's Multiple Solidarities"; Meléndez-Badillo, "Commemorating May Day in Puerto Rico"; and Santiago-Ortiz and Meléndez-Badillo, "La Calle Fortaleza."

29. Silén, *Apuntes para la historia*, 85.

30. Rancière, *Philosopher and His Poor*, xi.

31. I have explored these tensions in Meléndez-Badillo, "Party of Ex-convicts."

32. Known as the *giro decolonial* (decolonial turn), a wealth of knowledge production has explored the coloniality of power, a concept originally developed by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano. See Walsh and Mignolo, *On Decoloniality*. For more recent interventions from an Afro-Caribbean perspective, see Lebrón Ortiz, *Filosofía del cimarronaje*.

33. García, *Historia crítica, historia sin coartadas*, 69.

34. Quintero Rivera, *Patricios y plebeyos*, 195–98.

35. Álvarez Curbelo, *Un país del porvenir*, 213–316; Rodríguez-Silva, *Silencing Race*, 27–58; García, *Historia bajo sospecha*, 27–54.

36. Alamo-Pastrana, *Seams of Empire*; Llorens, *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family*; Arlene Torres, "La gran familia puertorriqueña."

37. For an example of how these processes of former slaves becoming proletarianized unraveled in the town of Guayama, see Luis A. Figueroa, *Sugar, Slavery, and Freedom*, 175–200.

38. Of those unemployed, 283,677 (84.2 percent) were women. Cited in Dietz, *Historia económica de Puerto Rico*, 149.

39. Romeral, *Musarañas*, 13.

40. Tirado Avilés, "Ramón Romero Rosa," 5–6.

41. Cited in Silén, *Apuntes para la historia*, 57–58.

42. Negrón Portillo, *Las turbas republicanas*, 82.

43. Silén, *Apuntes para la historia*, 57.

44. Acosta Lespier, *Una historia olvidada*, 22.

45. Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 62.

46. For the transformation of cigarmakers after the entrance of US capitalism, see Quintero Rivera, "Socialista y tabaquero"; and Baldrich, "Gender and the Decomposition."

47. Acosta Lespier, *Biografía de los alcaldes*, 8; Negrón Portillo, *Las turbas republicanas*.

48. For the myth, see García, *Historia crítica, historia sin coartadas*, 69–70. For Romero Rosa's expulsion, see Tirado Avilés, "Ramón Romero Rosa," 17.

49. For the strike, see Córdova Iturregui, *Ante la frontera del infierno*; Meléndez-Badillo, "Imagining Resistance"; and Rodríguez Vera, *Los fantoches del obrerismo*.

50. For a history of the Partido Obrero Insular, see Colón González, "¡Trabajadores al poder!"

51. I. Picó, *La mujer y la política puertorriqueña*, 30; Barceló Miller, *La lucha por el sufragio femenino*, 67–68.

52. Partido Socialista, *Actuaciones de la primera convención territorial celebrada*, 36.

53. See *Justicia: Órgano de la Federación Libre*, November 3, 1919, 8, 13; December 1, 1919, 5; December 22, 3, 19; January 19, 1920, 4, 18; March 1, 1920, 13–14; March 8, 1920, 9; and March 15, 1920, 10.

54. García and Quintero Rivera, *Desafío y solidaridad*, 82.

55. For other factors, see Álvarez Curbelo, "Un discurso ideológico olvidado."

56. Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 47.

57. Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 79.

58. See Álvarez Curbelo and Raffucci, *Frente a la torre*.

59. See Llorens, *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family*; and Rodríguez Castro, "Tradición y modernidad."

60. See E. Amador, "Women Ask Relief for Puerto Ricans."

61. Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, 37.

62. See Silvestrini, *Los trabajadores puertorriqueños*. From Taller de Formación Política, see *¡Huelga en la caña!*, *La cuestión nacional*, and *No estamos pidiendo el cielo*. See also Guadalupe de Jesús, *Sindicalismo y lucha política*; Rivera Caballero, *De lobos y corderos*; and Sanabria, *Puerto Rican Labor History*.

63. Ahmed, *Archaeology of Babel*, 3.

64. Conner, *Dreyfus Affair*, 120.

65. Meléndez-Badillo, "Imagining Resistance," 44.

66. Meléndez-Badillo, "Imagining Resistance," 44.

67. Lori L. Tharps, "The Case for Black with a Capital B," *New York Times*, November 18, 2014.

CHAPTER ONE. WORDS AS BRICKS AND PAGES AS MORTAR

1. A similar description of the city's night sounds was used by Torres de Solón in his short story "La balada," published in the workers' literary magazine *Luz y vida*, January 20, 1910, 9–10. Santiago Iglesias Pantín also remembered, "Not many people walked through those dark streets after nine at night. Pedestrians' steps echoed over the sidewalk slate, like a hollow grave. The gas and oil lighting were defective, so the shadows of the night gave the city an almost gloomy appearance." Iglesias Pantín, *Luchas emancipadoras*, 1:35.

2. While sources agree on the whereabouts and the attendance of the meeting, some disagree on when it took place. Sources also mention "5 San José St," but there was no such number, which leads me to believe it was "55 San José St." See Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, *Reporte de procedimientos*, 45; Romeral, *Santiago Iglesias*, 6; Valencia, "Raíces del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño"; Iglesias Pantín, *Luchas emancipadoras*, 1:40; and Alonso Torres, *Cuarenta años de lucha proletaria*, 104.

3. For the term "the alternate capital," see Quintero Rivera, *Ponce*. For *El artesano*, see Meléndez-Badillo, *Voces libertarias*, 93.

4. Pedreira, *El periodismo*, 30.

5. García, "Las primeras actividades."

6. "Artesanos: Unión! Unión!," *El artesano*, January 11, 1874, 1–2.

7. "Correspondencia 'El artesano,'" *El artesano*, January 25, 1874, 3.

8. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 23.

9. For *Ensayo obrero*, see Meléndez-Badillo, "Orígenes del 1ro de Mayo en Puerto Rico."; for May Day celebrations, see Gutiérrez, *Los orígenes libertarios del Primero de Mayo*; Goyens, "Introduction," 4; and "Lo que ocurre" and "Era de esperarse," *El productor* (Havana, Cuba) May 11, 1890, 1–2.

10. Cohn, *Underground Passages*.

11. *1ro de maio: Organo de propaganda socialista no Brasil* (Federal Capital, Brazil), May 1, 1898.

12. See Foucault, *Lectures on the Will to Know*, 213; and Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 15n2.

13. As Benjamin wrote of the Soviet press in the 1920s, in this period in Puerto Rico, "work itself has its turn to speak." Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Walter Benjamin*, 225.

14. See Pedreira, *El periodismo*. For the *Aguinaldo puertorriqueño*, see Álvarez Curbelo, *Un país del porvenir*, 230.

15. Print laws were compiled and revised in 1880. See *Ley de imprenta para la isla de Puerto Rico*. Unions, nonetheless, were banned. See García Leduc, *Apuntes para una historia breve de Puerto Rico*, 250–53.