

UC Santa Barbara

Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

Anticolonial Anti-Intervention: Puerto Rican Independentismo and the US 'Anti-Intervention' Left in Reagan-era Boston

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8qn312mm>

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 9(1)

Author

Larson, Eric D.

Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.5070/T891030631

Copyright Information

Copyright 2018 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Anticolonial Anti-Intervention: Puerto Rican *Independentismo* and the US ‘Anti-Intervention’ Left in Reagan-era Boston

ERIC D. LARSON, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Scholars have increasingly criticized the liberal framework of literature about transnational politics that suggests that transnational politics fundamentally revolve around solidarity relationships between full citizens of distinct nation-states. These transnational histories often reflect the experiences and unique opportunities of full citizens of Global North nation-states.¹ This has also been the case with scholarship on movements of the US left that sought to challenge US military and economic intervention in the Third World, and particularly Latin America and the Caribbean, after the 1960s. Hector Perla, for instance, has highlighted how Third World activists, including refugees and politically targeted communists and socialists, strategically directed solidarity activists in the US. Norma Stoltz Chinchilla’s work illuminates the ways unauthorized migrants and refugees grounded revolutionary politics and freedom struggles in sanctuary and other efforts in Los Angeles.² Patricia Stuelke has criticized the way white, Christian solidarity activists emphasized their loving “affective commonality” with “virtuous, sacrificial Central American victimhood” during the national liberation struggles of the 1980s. This approach focused on redeeming a guilty US superpower in ways that distanced the movement from connecting Reagan-era militarism with racialized neoliberal violence in domestic settings. In suggesting that this kind of internationalism echoes nineteenth-century imperial benevolence or liberal developmentalist orientations toward rescue or uplift, the works of Stuelke, Laura Briggs, Josefina Saldaña and others fundamentally interrogate whether solidarity across imperial borders can ever be simply “altruistic.”³

This article adds another layer to the analysis of solidarity politics in the 1980s by considering the case of what I call “anticolonial anti-intervention,” as reflected in the activities of el Colectivo Puertorriqueño de Boston, an organization in Boston which has yet to be considered in the scholarly literature. Based on interviews and archival research in Puerto Rico, Massachusetts, and New York, the story of el Colectivo complicates typologies of solidarity by illuminating how diasporic colonial subjects articulated an anti-interventionist politics that not only reflected their support for colonized nations elsewhere, such as Central America, but also highlighted their own colonial subjection and racialization in the urban US at the height of Reaganism.⁴

Like the queer Central America solidarity work in places like San Francisco, el Colectivo countered the privatized “reparative” politics of some Christian sanctuary activists.⁵ Yet in centering their own colonial subjection as they strategized ways to contest empire in Central America as well as its effects on urban Boston, the work of el Colectivo challenged the conventional solidarity frameworks that envisioned “[r]evolution as a distant object of desire,” as Hobson has eloquently articulated.⁶ Members of el Colectivo developed the organization’s politics of anticolonial anti-intervention by organizing against US imperial aggression in Central America even as they highlighted their own status as migrant subjects in a colonial diaspora. They adapted revolutionary terms of national liberation and self-rule through mainland notions of “community control,” and ultimately recalibrated Puerto Rican *independentismo* for the Reagan-era US mainland.

Anti-Intervention in the Age of Reagan

While histories of the New Left have often explained it in terms of the 1960s decade, new scholarship on the “long ‘60s” has helped illuminate how some struggles, including Third World national liberation struggles, continued or even began after the 1968 wave of insurgent politics. After the height of the anti-Vietnam war movement, for instance, a wide-ranging “anti-intervention” movement sprung forth, particularly in relationship to Latin America.⁷ Mainland support for Puerto Rican independence, for instance, exploded in the 1970s, as the Puerto Rican Socialist Party and others mobilized twenty thousand people at Madison Square Garden for a pro-independence rally.⁸

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the profound shift to the right in the US after the 1970s, reinvigorated anti-intervention networks, many of whom envisioned the struggles, war, and intervention in Central America as “another Vietnam.” The warfare and repression in El Salvador, for instance, signaled to leftwing Salvadorans and US allies that the US must build a national alliance of locally run solidarity groups. This larger alliance, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), issued a series of national calls to action, and the Boston network that responded built its local branch as the Central American Solidarity Alliance (CASA), which became the early center of the secular left’s response to revolution and

repression in Central America.⁹ Boston was one of the important nodes of the Central America Peace and Solidarity Movement, including through its local coalitions of the national “Pledge of Resistance” organization.¹⁰ The broad-based movement in Boston helped make Cambridge a “Sanctuary City” in 1985 and helped win congressional rejections of Reagan administration funding for Central American wars.¹¹ The histories of the anti-intervention movement rarely foreground the Latinx diasporas that often helped power them, and the same is true for those that focus on the Boston area.¹² While *el Colectivo*, like many organizations tied to the larger networks of anti-intervention activity, was not by itself a large organization, it advocated a kind of anti-intervention that directly challenged the class and ethno-racial segregation of the movement itself.

El Colectivo Puertorriqueño de Boston

The story of *el Colectivo*, as well as other Puerto Rican efforts after the 1970s, reflect that the push for Puerto Rican and Latin American independence continued to surge in the Puerto Rican diaspora, even if international solidarity peaked in the 1970s.¹³ Founded by Tubal Padilla and other Puerto Rican community activists in 1982, *el Colectivo* emerged from the fragments of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, which had struggled to overcome internal debates about participation in island elections, the relationship between national independence and socialism, and the role of armed struggle.¹⁴ One of *el Colectivo*’s direct predecessors in Boston, the *Sociedad Cultural Boricua*, emerged from “a trajectory that came from the PSP ... [amidst] all the ruptures that happen[ed] in the PSP [and] circulate[d] through the branch in New York and to the satellites like in Boston,” according to *el Colectivo* activist Loida Martínez. The *Sociedad* organized public events that featured Puerto Rican artists, musicians, and other cultural expressions in Boston in the early 1980s.¹⁵ By 1983 it coordinated study group meetings that were attracting more than fifty people. It named two members—Carlos Cruz and Martínez—“co-coordinators” to organize the collective’s work.¹⁶ After a decade of student-based *independentismo* and efforts to develop grassroots bases in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and on the island, those who founded the *Colectivo* in the early 1980s saw in Boston new opportunities for community-based work. For many, it meant postgraduate opportunities in the progressive urban planning programs at UMASS-Boston or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. For others, it meant paid work in community-based organizations or in the public agencies that served the poor and racial minorities, many of which were created after Black and Puerto Rican struggles to resist displacement through “urban renewal” efforts in the 1960s and 1970s.

The organization initiated a series of internal political education programs that combined abstract theory with Boston-based dilemmas.¹⁷ Unlike the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, *el Colectivo* was an organization with diverse ideologies, flexible hierarchies, and independence from political decisions made in San Juan or PSP offices

in New York.¹⁸ Hardly isolated from the rest of this highly segregated city, though, el Colectivo members used the events to deepen their analyses and formulate an “alternative” (their newspaper was named *La Alternativa*) vision of society for Latinxs in the area.¹⁹ In the wake of the decline of the Boston Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the early Colectivo also dedicated itself to formulating new understandings of Puerto Rican society and the prospects for socialism. Intensive study sessions and presentations characterized early Colectivo events.²⁰ In the months leading up to their first publication of *La Alternativa*, their work was about “self-development and self-actualization” through political education. They concentrated on the works of Chilean socialist Marta Hanneker and invited community speakers.²¹

The conference committee, for instance, organized events at community colleges and community spaces that featured analysts and activists debating Puerto Rican poverty and the community’s latent power. Women in the Colectivo created a successful radio program for airing on International Women’s Day on the station run by activists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The program featured Puerto Rican music, poetry, and political analysis. One early public conference sponsored by el Colectivo brought in members of the Colectivo Socialista from New York, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and the Comité Movimiento de Izquierda Nacional Puertorriqueno.²² It was held at the local Latinx social service agency La Alianza Hispana, which was directed by Colectivo supporter Nelson Merced. Those who initiated the Colectivo exchanged literature and information with *independentista* activists throughout the Northeast as well as in Ohio and Chicago.²³

The Underside of the ‘Massachusetts Miracle’

Early neoliberal Boston was characterized by the rapid gentrification of a city to which Puerto Ricans had only recently migrated en masse. The racialization of Puerto Ricans as an urban “problem” in Boston, in the wake of the city’s violent white reaction to school desegregation in the 1970s, echoed the broader discourses of the criminalization of US urban life in the Reagan era. Boston’s shift toward science, technology, education, and medical industries in the eighties primarily benefitted white professionals, though the resulting, significant drop in overall unemployment between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s led some to call it the “Massachusetts miracle.” But the skyrocketing housing costs, evictions, and the dearth of unionized or living-wage jobs for the city’s Puerto Ricans and other racialized populations signaled how its communities of color mostly experienced the underside of the miracle economy.²⁴

Unlike Miami, Chicago, or Los Angeles, Boston was hardly a center of Latinx culture and politics. But Latinx experiences in Boston stand out because of the legacies of Latinx struggles for housing and education in the 1970s, elite efforts to dismantle the reforms that came out of that activism, and the striking poverty of the city’s growing Latinx population, which doubled in the decade after 1970. Studies by the Urban League argued that Boston’s Latinxs were poorer and less educated than

Latinxs and Blacks in eleven cities in the US, and forty-two percent lived in poverty in the city in 1980. Only a quarter had completed high school. The “miracle” economy of the 1980s helped Latinxs less than other ethno-racial groups; using statistics from 1990, one University of Wisconsin study argued that the state’s Latinx population, which had become the largest ethno-racial minority, endured higher poverty rates than any other “Latino group in the United States.”²⁵

Puerto Ricans, who made up around half of the city’s Latinxs between the early 1970s and early 1990s, also endured distinct challenges and opportunities given their historic colonial relationship with the US. Since the Spanish–Cuban–American War²⁶ of 1898 and the US occupation of the island, the US government had denied Puerto Rico independence and had agreed to only the most limited forms of autonomy. Despite their US citizenship, the benefits of which refugees and new immigrants from places like the Dominican Republic or Central America rarely enjoyed, Puerto Ricans were amongst the poorest Latinxs of the city. They had been recruited during the 1960s and 1970s for manufacturing work just as those employers began to relocate or close, and the work that remained was the least stable and lowest-waged.²⁷ Gentrification or disinvestment ravaged heavily Puerto Rican neighborhoods like the South End or Roxbury. Nowhere was the latter more evident than in the “white–Hispanic riots” in nearby Lawrence, MA. In the summer of 1984, French Canadian whites battled Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, causing the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination—whose Puerto Rican director also spoke at Central American solidarity rallies—to determine that several Massachusetts towns were likely to be confronted by similar violent clashes.²⁸

Grassroots Organizing or Empire ‘Over There’?

Still, the PSP had always had an important presence in Boston and New England in the 1970s.²⁹ Unlike some Puerto Rican proindependence groups, the PSP and other Puerto Rican independence efforts mobilized anticolonial, rather than just nationalist, perspectives on Puerto Rico. The PSP had reinterpreted elements of independence leader Pedro Albizu Campos in light of the Third World–oriented Marxism of the 1960s and 1970s. As the founders of *el Colectivo* moved to Boston in the late 1970s from the island or from elsewhere in the urban northeast, they organized around the issue that the PSP leadership had never adequately addressed the struggles of mainland Puerto Ricans.³⁰

Discussions about the relationships between national independence and socialism had long dominated leftwing Puerto Rican circles. Some *independentistas* thought the working-class mainland communities were an obstacle, or even a threat, to securing the island’s independence. Once in the US, they reasoned, these communities would assimilate, turn reformist, or simply deprioritize the independence of the island, even if they were interested in socialism. Some critics have even blamed returning migrant workers as the root cause of Puerto Rico’s racism; their impact

would “denationalize” the island culture.³¹ Mainland society undoubtedly introduced new challenges and opportunities for Puerto Rican independence organizers. PSP circles, for instance, were historically home to significant levels of homophobia.³² Unlike the island, Boston was home to sizeable, diverse, and publicly active LGBTQ activist circles. Within the highly visible, well-resourced white LGBTQ network, some radical white queers were active in pro-Central America, anti-intervention politics.³³

Other *independentistas* understood struggles on the mainland through their focus on building socialism worldwide. For many, Communist Party leader César Andreu Iglesias was influential: He argued that the struggle for independence had remained the province of small sectors of the Puerto Rican middle-class and elite because it had failed to integrate that project with socialism—only through socialism could independence be created by and for the working classes.³⁴ Early PSP militants had argued that working-class Puerto Ricans on the mainland—who constituted around one-third of the Puerto Rican nation’s population—could become an important part of the independence project, but the project needed a socialist edge to respond to Puerto Rican workers’ class interests.³⁵ Far from another “national minority” equivalent to Mexican Americans or African Americans, mainlanders’ extensive and profound ties to the island made them an “oppressed nationality” in the beast’s belly. The island’s full independence would profoundly shape their future. Others, including many who ultimately formed el Colectivo, pushed the party to adopt a “dual priority,” in which the party would also recognize the struggle of the mainland’s working-class communities as one that could better lead to both socialism and an independent Puerto Rico.³⁶ Yet many urban activists in the US argued that the party leaders, many of them upper-class island-based intellectuals, never fully recognized the value of mainland organizing, and expected the US branch to be a mere “fan club” of the island struggle. These tensions, which contributed to the decline of the PSP, played out in the early 1980s as national leaders like Bras prioritized the cross-class national liberation project over the building of a “workers’ party,” one based on the power of organized Puerto Rican workers on the mainland and on the island.³⁷

Ultimately, el Colectivo mobilized elements of Puerto Rican nationalism not simply to narrow its field of vision—as nationalism often does—but to define and mobilize the city’s Puerto Rican diaspora for life and struggle in a multiracial, segregated, and economically unequal setting.³⁸ The group converted its protagonist of revolutionary change from an oppressed ethno-national enclave to a multiethnic community ready for Black–Brown Boston even as it maintained many of the component parts—and gendered and racialized exclusions—of Latin American and Caribbean revolutionary nationalisms.³⁹

Not unlike the debates in the Puerto Rican radical scene, the Central America solidarity movement was also divided over questions of long-term organizing in the US and short-term impact on empire “over there.” This played out in the terrain of racialized and class urban politics in the context of the US presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson in 1984. The West Coast organizations tied to CISPES, for instance,

promoted Alinsky-like face-to-face organizing, and often adhered to a strategy partly outlined by organizations in El Salvador that emphasized grassroots organizing for long-term support for a “prolonged people’s war,” akin to Vietnam.⁴⁰ The “East Coast” strategy, particularly with the New York group which was tightly intertwined with the Jackson campaign, focused more on media visibility, policy work, and highlighting the issue in order to bridge already existing liberal organizations.⁴¹ The Resistencia Nacional tendency in El Salvador likewise privileged a strategy that revolved around recruiting celebrities and high-profile figures to the table to spur a “counter-coup” in the country, partly through building a cross-class alliance.⁴² Another change was CISPES, which successfully created a local branch in Boston, and hired longtime white activist Mike Prokosch. The CISPES that emerged was, in fact, the remainder of the group from the split over the Jesse Jackson campaign, where some locals, particularly in New York area, left the group when CISPES refused to work more closely with the Rainbow Coalition, not only to support Jackson but to develop closer relationships with African American communities. Jackson, in his campaign, strongly opposed Reagan’s Central America policy.

El Colectivo navigated these questions of local and global, short-term and long-term, monoracial or multiracial, through their simultaneous navigation of the colonial realities of the Puerto Rican community. They both protested intervention elsewhere but simultaneously drew attention to themselves as victims of continuing colonial violence. Empire “over there” impacted them in distinct ways as Puerto Ricans and racialized colonial subjects in the mainland.

One of the organization’s early projects was its participation in the Central America referendum. Peace and solidarity organizations, together with el Colectivo, launched an effort to pass a non-binding referendum in the state that would demand the US government end military activities in Central America and invest that money in jobs and services. It ended up winning in most districts. While its front-page article in *La Alternativa* announced that Boston, through the collaborative efforts to pass the referendum, should be “for anti-interventionist unity,” it also sketched out why its Spanish-language readers should be particularly concerned. Reagan-era interventionism struck the Latinx community bluntly with its cuts in services. “During the first two years of Reagan, \$600 million dollars destined for social health programs in the state of Massachusetts have been cut,” it noted. North American empire in Central America also inflicted pain for colonial subjects in the US, threatening Puerto Rican land and dignity. “[Military] bases on Puerto Rico that had been out-of-use have recently been rehabilitated,” and the military once more hoped to use the island as a “military trampoline in the invasion of Central America.” It noted that “[b]road sectors of the puertorrican [sic] community have opposed Reagan’s plan for the Caribbean, and even the colonial legislature.”⁴³

The notion of a unified anti-intervention movement locally, however, was what led el Colectivo to participate broadly in anti-intervention activities in Boston. While many white activists’ first anti-intervention efforts materialized through their student

work opposing the Vietnam War, el Colectivo's anti-intervention organizing grew out of its work on the Puerto Rico situation as well as members' constant support of Communist Cuba.⁴⁴ Notices of events and protests about potential US war in Central America frequented the events calendar of the first issues of el Colectivo's newspaper in 1984. Tito Fuster, a founding member originally from Spain, noted that a relatively diverse social scene (primarily of whites and Latinxs of different ethnicities) attended dance or party fundraisers for the movement. That was the case despite the geographic separation of some of the activities; many of the largely white Central America solidarity or peace organizations were based north of the Charles River, in Cambridge and Somerville. el Colectivo and some leftists were based south of the river in the largely Black and Latinx communities of Roxbury and Dorchester. Yet one member asserted that the international solidarity scene in the area consisted of an interwoven community of middle-class migrants, refugees, and graduate students. "Boston was and is a magnet for people that were coming to do graduate work, many of them progressive, pro-independence ... You could find a number of Latin Americans, less than but a few, and they were pretty progressive: Cubans, the Puerto Rican community, progressive whites, in Cambridge with Cuba, and with Chile, and Nicaragua, and South Africa."⁴⁵ Some members of el Colectivo furthered their anti-intervention work by going to Central America. One member went to Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua to use his engineering skills to help consolidate the gains after the revolutionary victory over the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. Women from el Colectivo went as part of an invited commission by women's organizations in Nicaragua.

Far from mere temporary campaigns, relating to Latinx communities in Boston and Latin American/Caribbean communities transnationally was part of the battle against colonialism. This anticolonial brand of anti-intervention stemmed from how, for the PSP and el Colectivo, *capitalism* had widened the breach between the poor and the rich, but *colonialism* had widened the breach between the island and the Latin American world. El Colectivo's anti-intervention efforts, then, were rooted in this deeper desire to reconnect Puerto Rico to its Latin and Caribbean history.⁴⁶ Stories about Central America, Cuba, and Grenada frequented the pages of both *Claridad* and *La Alternativa* in these years. Maris Morison, Mauricio Gaston, and others worked closely with groups that fostered ties and support with Cuba. While writers in *La Alternativa* mostly shied away from using the term "socialism" amidst the anticommunist zeal of the Reagan era, they consistently lambasted US colonialism and its effects on the island's economy, environment, and culture. Finally, anticolonial anti-intervention also recognized how colonialism both severed mainland Puerto Ricans' ties to the island's roots *and* led to their racialized minoritization (as part of a pan-ethnic "Hispanic" population) in places like Boston. In an effort to persuade the Massachusetts Hispanic Commission to support a resolution on Puerto Rico's independence, Carlos Cruz argued that "[t]he colonial situation is the root of the

Puerto Rican diaspora which explains our presence here, and [explains] the scorn we're victims of in the Continental United States."⁴⁷

El Colectivo's simultaneous focus on the racialization of Puerto Rican and Latinx communities facilitated its relatively deep engagement with the mayoral campaign of the Black socialist Mel King, whose vision of connecting US empire to local minoritized communities paralleled that of el Colectivo. For both el Colectivo and King, anti-interventionism was not a matter of benevolent "reparative" politics, as Patricia Stuelke has examined in majority white organizations, or a deracialized Marxism.⁴⁸ It was an internationalism founded in opposing Reaganism, which they tied to both austerity at the local level and imperialistic militarism, as well as joint histories of engagement with anti-imperial Third worldism.

King, who envisioned his mayoral campaign as representing a "rainbow coalition," succeeded in recruiting key members of the Puerto Rican scene partly through their support for Puerto Rican *independentismo* and anti-intervention causes.⁴⁹ In the late 1970s, the then state representative supported local efforts to free four Puerto Rican nationalists jailed since their armed assault on the US Congress in 1954.⁵⁰ Together with select local unions and Black organizations, King cosponsored and helped lead the fight for what was then the strongest South Africa divestment bill in the country. In 1984 alone, he monitored elections in El Salvador and visited anticolonial activists in Ireland.

For their part, the members of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party and its militant networks had deepened their work with Black organizations in international contexts. Bras and others had led the PSP to successfully bring their case for decolonization to the United Nations, and the party's International Commission played an important role in developing solidarity relationships with anti-imperial organizations and the Non-Aligned Movement. The US branch's efforts against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia were particularly influential.⁵¹ In Boston, el Colectivo regularly wrote about apartheid, and supported the "Jobs for Peace, not a Budget for Bombs" campaigns led by King and others.⁵² Fuster first arrived in the US in New York, but moved to Boston after Rainbow activist Juanita Wade told him King's campaign needed help building Latinx support for his 1983 mayoral candidacy. In addition, the Cuban American progressive Mauricio Gaston, a close political ally of el Colectivo who played a crucial role in the Boston PSP, helped coordinate the campaign. King's Rainbow Coalition was the inspiration for Jesse Jackson to use as a model in his 1984 presidential campaign.

While white-led organizations in Boston also spurred a working-class anti-interventionism, King's insistence on battling racism as well as building working-class internationalism paralleled that of el Colectivo. In labor organizations specifically, a growing number of white leftists tried to build support for anti-intervention in Central America by framing US intervention as a threat to unionists in the Americas. While this internationalism purported to be based in the experiences of the region's working classes, it sometimes failed to acknowledge the realities of racism and xenophobia

within those classes.⁵³ Some figures in the labor committee for Central America formed in Boston and western Massachusetts at this time saw race as something beyond, or threatening to, their class-oriented purview. According to John Weissman of the Letter Handlers' Union, building pro-Central America politics inside the unions was based around building class consciousness through better contracts or workplace economic issues, not by wading into local race relations. Indeed, sentiment against Puerto Ricans and other people of color was severe in his local union. Even though "some of [the white letter handlers] would have liked to have participated in the [white-Hispanic] riots," he said (referring to white violence against Latinxs in Lawrence, as mentioned above), that was not a matter for the labor committee: "We just figured there's nothing you can do about [white men] like them."⁵⁴ That is not to say el Colectivo did not collaborate at all with union-based efforts.⁵⁵ It cosponsored, with unions and CASA's Central America committee and other organizations, the day-long New England Labor Conference on Central America in November 1984.

Adapting Anticolonial Nationalism to the Urban US

"Why aren't those who endure the winter cold without decent heating or ... [those] who have to conform to a mediocre education" called "martyrs?" asked Colectivo member Carlos Cruz in a speech in 1983. He affirmed that "[o]ur community is one that's full of martyrs" and that "[i]t's necessary to convert martyrdom and collective suffering into political action."⁵⁶ While Cruz was commemorating anticolonial insurgency against Spanish rule in Puerto Rico, he also pondered how the themes and symbols of the Puerto Rican independence struggle—like heroes, martyrs, poverty, and sacrifice—might apply to a diasporic Puerto Rican community confined by deindustrialization, racism, and nearly a century of US colonialism.

If el Colectivo enacted its resistance to US empire in the Americas through its work in opposing Reagan-era military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean, it maintained its struggle for Puerto Rican independence from US rule by recalibrating its anticolonial *independentismo* for an urban, mainland context. It forcefully opted for the position that organizing the Puerto Rican diaspora around urban issues relevant to their communities was crucial for socialism and independence. Yet it maintained its *independentista* emphases on self-rule, cultural affirmation, and shared history so common to revolutionary nationalisms. We can see this most clearly through its focus on the cultural reproduction of community and its understandings of 1980s-era articulations of "community control." Even if the independence of Puerto Rico seemed increasingly distant in an age of increased US military intervention, popular self-determination of the Puerto Rican community remained a focus for the Colectivo. In addition, the early 1980s was a crucial moment for cultural nationalism on the island. The new, pro-statehood government had implemented a variety of "cultural laws" that were perceived as attacks on government cultural institutions. In response, the pro-autonomy Popular Democratic Party (*Partido Popular Democrático*) ran against

them in 1984 with the slogan of “Much more Puerto Ricanness.”⁵⁷ As Hilda Lloréns has argued, the art of Jack Delano and others traced and interpreted the ways that “American” culture—particularly as symbolized by the automobile, the mall, and fast food—had taken the island by storm by the 1980s.⁵⁸

Though Puerto Ricans had tenaciously fought US efforts to Americanize the island throughout the twentieth century, many saw themselves as also distinctly tied to the US, particularly with the circular migration of the post-World War II period. Defining Puerto Ricanness for *el Colectivo*, then, often meant highlighting the distinctions between Latin American cultures and dominant white culture. *El Colectivo*’s vision of independence was always tied to patriotic struggle, rather than a “return” to an original nation, like that of the peaceful (non-African) agrarian republic often imagined by dominant forms of cultural nationalism.⁵⁹ Following the tradition of *independentistas* on the island and in the US, *el Colectivo* organized a “People’s Contingent” to march in the annual Puerto Rican Day parade, and its banners demanded justice for Puerto Ricans in the city and independence on the island. The parade and the annual Betances Festival were featured prominently in July issues of *La Alternativa*. Unlike the increasingly commercial Puerto Rican Day parade and festivities, the Betances Festival was based in the Villa Victoria (Victory Village) housing project, a community-run low-income housing complex created after major organizing drives against the gentrification of the Puerto Rican South End neighborhood in the late 1960s. Named after the pro-independence, antislavery militant Ramon Emerterio Betances (1827–98), the Villa Victoria residents were precisely the working-class Puerto Ricans that *el Colectivo* sought to work with.

If the symbols and themes of self-determination continued to shape *el Colectivo*’s urban organizing, defining how that self, i.e., the community, looked, acted, and reproduced itself became another crucial matter. For women in particular, the politics of both cultural and biological reproduction were eminently relevant to *el Colectivo*’s urban anticolonialism.

Women pushed the politics of reproduction in both *el Colectivo* and *La Alternativa*. As the *Colectivo* gained momentum in 1983, Loida Martínez and others pressured the collective to commit to arranging child care at all of its meetings, and to pay for it with the *Colectivo*’s limited funds. Most of the group’s decisions were made through discussion and consensus-building, and arranging for child care became a *de facto* rule.⁶⁰ If women in PSP circles in the 1970s had increasingly abandoned the notion that socialism and independence would themselves bring gender equality, *La Alternativa* writers asserted that struggles for the production and reproduction of a diasporic Puerto Rican community must simultaneously be struggles for women’s reproductive rights. As one article about the sterilization of Puerto Rican women argued, women should have the right to make informed reproductive decisions oriented toward their own well-being, without pressure by government doctors, poverty, or the men in their lives. “The freedom of reproduction is indispensable in the liberation of the woman and of her people,” concluded Iris Ana García.⁶¹ Nilda Quijano

took the lead in organizing the workers in a largely Puerto Rican women's shelter, and the effort became an important one in the Colectivo.⁶² As a Puerto Rican feminist ally argued in an interview published in *La Alternativa*, Puerto Rican progressives had to confront the politics of the family to ensure the future of the struggle. "Racism and sexism occur in the heart of the family as well as in the workplace," Gloria Gonzalez Rivera said. "This is a struggle that will take all our lives and many generations, and it will be my kids who continue it."⁶³

Both women and men advanced the importance of cultural reproduction by lamenting the colonizer's cultural influence on Puerto Ricans' everyday behavior. One member, who worked in social services in *La Alianza Hispana*, noted that Puerto Rican youth "wouldn't want to speak Spanish so people wouldn't know they were from the [Latinx] community." Many Puerto Rican parents criticized other parents for speaking Spanish to their kids in the home.⁶⁴ Core members of el Colectivo reinforced the threat of Americanization by deploying another longstanding element of Latin American revolutionary nationalism—the critique of Anglo culture as crass, materialistic, and fundamentally different from a familial, cohesive, roots-based Latin community.⁶⁵ Juan Vargas wrote that as an "exiled [Puerto Rican] in the United States," it was a "new and complex experience to return to the island." Seeing the local stores displaced by US department stores there had been particularly hard, he wrote, as well as living in a "consumerist economy that dictates to us, day after day, artificial values that don't belong to Puerto Rico-ness (*puertorriqueñidad*)."⁶⁶ This was especially clear in the two-year anniversary issue of *La Alternativa*, which the collective dedicated to dissecting the avaricious commercial media. Rafael Quinjano cited how children in daycare in the US watched up to six hours of television a day, and how films and popular shows like the *Karate Kid* movie and cartoon series *Masters of the Universe* featured nearly ten acts of violence each hour.⁶⁷ Jorge Dávalos and Efrain Collado both critiqued how television threatened to make people passive or even "a dead mass, without anything that could wake it." Elba Crespo analyzed how advertising objectified women. She described, for instance, the showcase at a Harvard Square men's shoe store that featured a bloody women's mannequin with a man standing above it, confirming that "I would kill [a woman] for these shoes."⁶⁸ In Colectivo meetings, women demanded that the organization provide child care that facilitated their education and growth; they had to go beyond simply sitting the children in front of a television set.⁶⁹

Schooling in Boston, too, was another arena in which Colectivo members saw colonial assimilation strategies as well as generalized racism. The resegregation of the school system after the highly controversial 1974 court order to desegregate schools, which had mostly exempted white-dominated suburban schools from integrating with those of poor whites and racial minorities, and after busing Black students into working-class white areas led to white riots, walkouts, and massive violence. As *La Alternativa* detailed in the cover story of its third issue, public schools consisted of sixty percent white students before the desegregation order. Fearing, as the article stated, the influence of students of color, whites fled to private schools and suburbs, and the

schools were only thirty percent white by the mid-1980s.⁷⁰ Puerto Rican experiences in Boston clearly showed, *La Alternativa* argued, “that all Puerto Ricans are equal in the face of the system and the racists regardless of the position that we may have in relation to political status of the island. Even the most loyal [person] to the [US] flag and US citizenship is unable to escape the prevailing racism and violence of the system.”⁷¹ In the mid-1980s, hostility to immigrants led to a series of English-only bills in several US states, including Massachusetts. These efforts met stiff resistance from *el Colectivo* and others who demanded the right to bilingual education.⁷²

The other key shared orientation between Puerto Rican radicals tied to *el Colectivo* and the King campaign was the notion of “community control,” particularly in the arena of housing. Inspired by the anticolonial nationalism sweeping much of the world in the late 1960s, King and others led struggles that channeled demands for redistribution and rights through the prism of the self-determination of a racially and class-defined community. Far from advocating for simply more state-based redistributive programs—including school integration—these movements advocated a shift in how they worked. King envisioned the gradual building of what he called a “chain of change” to fundamentally reshape politics into something more participatory. These campaigns sought “control” through their decentralization, democratization, and attention to racial injustice.

These sentiments can be seen in the approach to the disinvested historically Black and Latinx Dudley Square neighborhood. Fearing the gentrification and displacement caused by urban renewal in the heavily Puerto Rican South End, *Colectivo* activists and Rainbow activists from the Black community, like Ken Wade, were key leaders in efforts for housing justice that was controlled by residents. In 1984 and 1985, Tubal Padilla, Melvyn Colón, and others helped create the Dudley Square Neighborhood Initiative to establish community-controlled development in a neighborhood with one third of its area vacant—the result of arson, abandonment, and dumping. The initiative ultimately established a resident-run board and was able to secure eminent domain authority to place vacant, privately held land in a trust, as well as resist BRA plans to “develop” the area. *La Alternativa* was part of a dialogue with that of the nearby, newly created housing rights organization City Life/Vida Urbana.⁷³ In the era of the “New Federalism” of Reagan, which had initiated a steep decrease in federal funding for affordable housing, the joint work of Puerto Ricans and African Americans in Dudley Square was particularly notable.

By the 1980s, King, Colón, Padilla, and others interpreted their community control partly through their work in Boston-area centers of progressive urban planning at local universities. King directed the “Community Fellows” program at MIT, where *Colectivo* member Melvyn Colón received a Master’s in City Planning in 1982. Gaston taught in the Community Planning Center at UMass Boston’s College of Public and Community Service, where Padilla received an undergraduate degree. King’s collaborator and co-writer, political scientist James Jennings, was appointed dean of the college in 1983. King penned his major work on this matter in 1981, and he and

Gaston maintained theoretical discussions on community planning through the early 1980s.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Ultimately, the same dilemmas that forged the creation of el Colectivo led to its decline in the late 1980s. Which resources should be dedicated to the long-term organizing of the diaspora in the context of Reagan administration militarism abroad? And which should be dedicated to defending those who focused on the immediate liberation of the island, like the activists imprisoned in 1985?⁷⁵ Yet those dilemmas must be contextualized in the Boston anti-intervention scene. While Boston was a core node of the largely white Central America peace and solidarity efforts, that kind of anti-intervention did not always overlap with contemporary anti-intervention efforts in apartheid-era South Africa or in the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico.⁷⁶ That racialized division, combined with the alleged ties of the Puerto Rican prisoners to armed struggle, led public activities and protests supporting them to be relatively small.⁷⁷

More generally, the wave of anti-intervention activity after 1968 faded in the mid- and late 1980s. The Iran–Contra scandal spelled the end of active Reagan administration support for rightwing regimes in Central America. Dictatorships in the Southern Cone fizzled. And the national liberation hope of the New Left, including for Puerto Rico, slowed considerably. In Puerto Rico, in fact, pro-statehood (not just political “commonwealth” status, which *independentistas* also opposed) gained steam on the island in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The dilemma organizers faced must also be contextualized by highlighting the economic and class realities of el Colectivo and its environs. Like the Puerto Rican Socialist Party tying their working-class organizing to official labor unions hindered their growth in an era that featured broad-based attacks on unions.⁷⁸ El Colectivo organizers' economic ambitions, as well as their position as colonial diasporic subjects, pulled at them to leave Boston, either for the island or, more often, for work in public and non-profit service agencies on the Eastern seaboard. As largely (light-skinned) middle-class colonial migrants, they were less susceptible to the criminalizing gaze of the early war on drugs, which was steadily penetrating communities like Roxbury. At the same time, they denounced police racism and abuse, often tied to drug policing, in *La Alternativa*, in the later 1980s. Their attention to local racism and criminalization, in fact, set them apart from many island-based *independentista* intellectuals.

Another profoundly destabilizing force newly enveloped the city in the 1980s: AIDS, followed by public officials' refusal to acknowledge its destructive force. Gaston died of the disease in 1986, and other members—in addition to the Puerto Rican community more generally—were impacted by the grief, confusion, and economic and caregiving burdens the disease created. Homophobia in Boston's communities further prevented victims from getting support. While el Colectivo worked with Boston LGBTQ activists as part of Mel King's Rainbow Coalition, *La Alternativa* mostly failed to cover

issues of homophobia or the AIDS crisis, though the latter gained a full-page story in 1987.⁷⁹

The work of el Colectivo, as well as of Mel King and others, brings to light the ways some anti-intervention activists prized building internationalist political visions through long-term organizing work in working-class communities of color. Yet unlike union progressives, el Colectivo tied empire “over there” to racialized colonialism at home. They grappled with what it meant to live in a colonial diaspora as they helped build anti-intervention fervor in Boston. They centered the demand for Puerto Rican independence yet linked it to their resistance to US intervention elsewhere in Latin America, and even in South Africa. They recalibrated *independentista* visions of self-rule, including, through an updated version of community control, in the Reagan era.

Notes

This research would never have been possible without the efforts of the activists of El Colectivo—and that includes their courageous organizing in the 1980s as well as their time, insights, and generosity in the last several years as I initiated this project. In addition, José Soler has also been a constant source of insight, stories, and friendship. Thanks so much to all of you. The anonymous reviewers at the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* offered lucent, timely suggestions that have made this article infinitely better. I would also like to thank the Harvard University Gay and Lesbian Caucus’s Open Gate Grant and the Brown University Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America for research support for this project. Finally, I would like to thank Deepak Lamba-Nieves for his enthusiasm and helpful suggestions.

¹ Sharon Erickson Nepstad and Christian Smith, “The Social Structure of Moral Outrage in Recruitment to the US Central America Peace Movement,” in Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Poletta, eds. *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 158–74.

² As Héctor Perla has recently noted, the literature on the Central America solidarity movement has mostly ignored Latinx and Latin American contributions. That is indeed the case with the books that most prominently discuss the Massachusetts movement, as in Robert Surbrug, *Beyond Vietnam the Politics of Protest in Massachusetts, 1974–1990* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009); Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Roger C. Peace, *A Call to Conscience: The Anti/Contra War Campaign, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012). For a critique, see Héctor Perla, “Si Nicaragua Venció, El Salvador Vencerá: Central American Agency in the Creation of the U.S.: Central American Peace and Solidarity Movement,” *Latin American Research Review* 43, no. 2 (2008): 136–58. For an excellent example of scholarship on Latinx participation, see Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001). The movement on the West Coast was

more strongly tied to community organizing and had a much deeper Latinx base and leadership. See, for the differences, p. 130.

³ Laura Briggs, *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*, Latin America Otherwise (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Thomas Olesen, *International Zapatismo: The Construction of Solidarity in the Age of Globalization* (London and New York: Zed; Palgrave, 2005). For "altruistic solidarity," see Olesen. For a critical discussion of North American solidarity with Latin America, see Margaret Power and Julie A. Charlip, "Introduction: On Solidarity," *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 6 (2009): 3–9.

⁴ This research was partly inspired by the work on working-class internationalism and Black "freedom dreams" by a variety of scholars. See Dayo F. Gore, "From Communist Politics to Black Power: The Visionary Politics and Transnational Solidarities of Victoria 'Vicki' Ama Garvin," in *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, ed. Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002). See also Ashley D. Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*, Justice, Power, and Politics (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); and Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1955–1995* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

⁵ Emily K. Hobson, "'Si Nicaragua Venció': Lesbian and Gay Solidarity with the Revolution," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2012): 1–26. Emily K. Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left*, American Crossroads 44 (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016).

⁶ Hobson, "'Si Nicaragua,'" 15. El Colectivo's grassroots, anticolonial internationalism approached the "transfronteriza" sensibility of an emergent, pan-ethnic Latina/o Third worldism in the 1980s. See Ana Patricia Rodríguez, "The Fiction of Solidarity: *Transfronterista* Feminisms and Anti-Imperialist Struggles in Central American Transnational Narratives," *Feminist Studies* 3/4, nos. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2008): 199–226.

⁷ Women of color Feminism and Puerto Rican solidarity movements are two examples of movements that flourished in the 1970s. See Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005). Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See also Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (London: Verso Books, 2013). Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

⁸ Gosse, *Rethinking*.

⁹ The movement continued to trace evidence linking US-supported politicians to the raping and killing of the four US missionaries. See *CISPES Central America Monitor*, August 17, 1981, p. 3. Protestant and other Christian groups developed their own bases of engagement with the peoples and movements of Central America. The development of liberation theology-oriented

lay people and clergy, and (limited) movement support by religious institutions in both Nicaragua and El Salvador helped attract US Catholics, Protestants, and Unitarians.

¹⁰ Bradford D. Martin, *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 41.

¹¹ This consisted of CISPES, the Pledge of Resistance, Mobilization for Survival, and networks of Christian and Jewish sanctuary activists.

¹² Pierre Clavel's *Activists in City Hall* only mentions Puerto Ricans twice. Clavel, *Activists in City Hall: The Progressive Response to the Regan Era in Boston and Chicago* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010). See also the work of Christian Smith, and Perla's critique.

¹³ Carlos Alamo-Pastrana, *Seams of Empire: Race and Radicalism in Puerto Rico and the United States* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016). See also Sandy Placido, "A Global Vision: Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and the Puerto Rican Liberation Struggle, 1931–1992" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2017).

¹⁴ Luís Fernando Coss, "PSP Discute Su Rol En 1984," *Claridad*, July 22, 1983, sec. La Nación. José Soler argued that elections had moved from a tactical device to a strategy in itself. Soler, interview with the author, Nov. 6, 2012, New Bedford, MA. See also Juan Manuel Carrión, "The National Question in Puerto Rico," in *Colónial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico*, n. d., 67–75; Van Gosse, "El Salvador Is Spanish For Vietnam: A New Immigrant Left and the Politics of Solidarity," in *The Immigrant Left in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 302–30. See also Margaret Power, "From Freedom Fighters to Patriots: The Successful Campaign to Release the FALN Political Prisoners, 1980–1999," *Centro Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013).

¹⁵ Loida Martínez, interview with the author, January 24, 2013, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. Interview in Spanish; all translations in this article by the author.

¹⁶ Loida Martínez, interview with the author.

¹⁷ Colón, interview with the author, December 8, 2012, Natick, MA.

¹⁸ Loida Martínez, interview with the author; Padilla, telephone interview with the author, October 13, 2012. For an oral history of the Boston PSP in the 1970s, see Angel Amy-Moreno del Toro, "An Oral History of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in Boston, 1972–78," in *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Voices from the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 246–58.

¹⁹ A small grant from the Massachusetts-based Haymarket fund provided the start-up money, but its production and distribution were decidedly low-budget. Tubal Padilla and Tito Fuster formed its two-person editorial team and did everything from recruiting writers, designing pages, and distributing it personally with a borrowed car. The Haymarket money allowed them to make it a free paper with no advertisements, and each issue announced upcoming events of the Colectivo and other activist organizations, particularly those based in communities of color or working on Latin America-centered issues. The soon-to-be first director of the local CISPES chapter, Mike Prokosch, allowed the team to use the facilities of the *Dorchester Community News*. At least one issue included an ad for Red Sun Press as well.

²⁰ Martínez, interview with the author; Padilla, interview with the author.

²¹ Padilla, interview with the author; Colón, interview with the author.

²² *La Alternativa* 1, no. 4 (October 1984).

²³ Colón, interview with the author; Padilla, interview with the author.

²⁴ Miren Uriarte, "Contra Viento y Marea (Against All Odds): Latina/os Build Community in Boston," in Paul Osterman, et al., eds. *Latina/os in Boston: Confronting Poverty, Building Community* (Boston: The Boston Foundation, 1993), 11–12. In 1990 Latina/os formed 11 percent of the state's population (Uriarte, "Contra Viento," 4). See also Edwin Meléndez, "Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts," in Meléndez and Miren Uriarte-Gaston, eds. *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts* (Boston: The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, 1993), 15–37.

²⁵ Meléndez, "Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts," 4.

²⁶ The dominant term in the US is "Spanish–American War," but this name obscures the participation of colonized peoples in Cuba and the Philippines. Philip Sheldon Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895–1902*, Modern Reader (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

²⁷ Uriarte, "Contra Viento y Marea," xxii, 6, 12.

²⁸ See, for instance, issues 1–4 of *La Alternativa*. Central America was arguably the paper's biggest news topic in 1984. Though *El Colectivo* and earlier activists complained of the coverage of Puerto Rico in *La Semana*, the magazine dedicated full pages to single Central America stories that documented abuses and threats of US proxies. See, for instance, the weeks of March 5, 1982 and of September 15, 1985. Saving bilingual education was also an important story for all the papers in 1985 and 1986, and pro-bilingual education groups won the battle with the state legislature in March 1986. For the riots, comparing coverage in *El Mundo*, *La Semana*, and the *Boston Globe* is instructive. It was a major story from the two nights of street battles (August 8 and 9, 1984) through the local elections of the following year.

²⁹ Comité Seccional, "Comité Seccional (organizational map)," circa 1983, José A. Soler papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 18, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections.

³⁰ Colón, interview with the author.

³¹ Alamo-Pastrana, *Seams of Empire*. Alamo-Pastrana, for instance, documents this attitude in the 1990s-era work of Eduardo Seda Bonilla. See Eduardo Seda Bonilla, "Un Nuevo Racism Es Amenaza a La Continuidad Del Pueblo Puertorriqueño En La Historia," *Lares: Grito Cultural* 7, no. 1 (1998): 5–8. Unlike mainland-based groups like the Young Lords, the PSP's center of gravity was on the island. It committed itself to building solidarity and fundraising efforts on the continent, but its base-building work in Puerto Rican communities remained undeveloped. The belief in the centrality Puerto Rican independence mostly held together the party's core, despite tensions over the party's male dominance, hostility to homosexuality, and dedication to community-based work in the US.

³² Soler, interview with the author.

³³ For instance, the work of the Theater Offensive and its creation of the “United Fruit Company,” an anti-imperialist theater group. Abe Rybeck, interview with the author, September 19, 2012. Theater Offensive materials are available at the Northeastern University (Boston, MA) archives.

³⁴ Berch Berberoglu, *The National Question: Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Self-Determination in the 20th Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009). See the essay by Juan Manuel Carrión, p. 146.

³⁵ United States Branch PSP, “Desde Las Entrañas ... Political Declaration of the United States Branch of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party,” 1973, José A. Soler papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 17, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections.

³⁶ Most of the New England fragments of the parties of this *Nuevo Despertar* period, and among them *el Colectivo Puertorriqueño* in Boston, maintained national liberation as a goal, but focused mostly on working-class organizing and local campaigns. See Andrés Torres, “Political Radicalism in the Diaspora,” in Torres, and José E. Velásquez, eds., *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 17, 18. For additional thoughts on the national question from the president of the US Branch of the PSP in the 1980s, see Eric Larson, “José Soler: A Life Working at the Intersections of Nationalism, Internationalism, and Working-Class Radicalism: An Interview with Eric Larson,” *Radical History Review*, no. 128 (May 2017): 62–76.

³⁷ For “fan club” term, see José Cruz, *Identity And Power: Puerto Rican Politics and the Challenge of Ethnicity* (Temple University Press, 2010), 109. In contrast, socialists in the early twentieth century favored not independence but closer ties to the US. See César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

³⁸ Uriarte, “Contra Viento y Marea.”

³⁹ Here I am following Ana Y. Ramos and others in re-examining the possibilities of Puerto Rican nationalism in the wake of a wave of publications focusing on how Puerto Rican nationalism has often reinforced the marginalization of Black, Female, and LGBTQ Puerto Ricans. See Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). For more on Puerto Rican revolutionary nationalism in Boston, see Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, “Saving the *Parcela*,: A Short History of Boston’s Puerto Rican Community,” in Carmen Teresa Whalen, Victor Vásquez Hernández, eds. *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).

⁴⁰ As Prokosch described, this was the approach of Las Fuerzas Populares de Liberación “Farabundo Martí” (Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Front). Prokosch, interview with the author, Boston, MA, October 14, 2011.

⁴¹ Prokosch, interview with the author. See also Hamilton and Chinchilla, *Seeking Community*, 130–31.

⁴² Prokosch, interview with the author.

⁴³ No author, "Referéndum sobre América Central, *La Alternativa* 1, no. 4 (Oct. 1984): 1.

⁴⁴ Miren Uriarte, interview with the author, Boston, MA, Nov. 8, 2012. Padilla, interview with the author.

⁴⁵ Nelson Merced, telephone interview with the author, Sept. 20, 2012.

⁴⁶ Even with the rapid decline of the PSP and the US branch after 1978, both retained solidarity with Central America (and the Caribbean) as crucial parts of their programs. See Comité Seccional, "Resolución del Comité Seccional," 1982, José A. Soler papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 19, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections. The PSP, particularly with the influence of Juan Mari Bras, had always been a party of transnational organizing and the unity of the Americas and Latin America. Bras argued that, following the legacy of Latin American independence leader Simón Bolívar, the Antilles "form part of Our America." Bras, "Puerto Rico: La agenda Inconclusa de Bolívar," speech at the Congreso Sobre el Pensamientos Políticos Latinoamericanos, Caracas, June, 29, 1983, reprinted in *Claridad*, June, 22–26, 1983, p. 16. See also Juan Mari Bras, *El independentismo en Puerto Rico: su pasado, su presente y su porvenir* (San Juan, P.R.: Editorial CEPA, 1984).

⁴⁷ No author, "CPB ante Comision [sic] Hispana," *La Alternativa* 1, no. 2 (July 1984): 2.

⁴⁸ Patricia Stuelke, "The Reparative Politics of Central America Solidarity Movement Culture," *American Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (Sept. 2014): 767–90; Becky W. Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism* (U of Minnesota Press, 2001). Thompson discusses how Suzanne Ross, an early leader of CISPES, critiqued her organization for how its white-dominated membership avoided dealing with (anti-Black) racism: "Because 'a group of people of color [Marxist Salvadoran organizations] were leading us, we don't have to deal with anything else.'" See Thompson, 254.

⁴⁹ Fuster, interview with the author, Boston, MA, Oct. 3, 2012; Fuster met Wade at a rally denouncing the massacre of antiracist labor organizers in Greensboro, North Carolina, now known as the "Greensboro Massacre."

⁵⁰ Colón, interview with the author; Liana Perez-Felix to Junta de Directores, Feb. 6, 1979, *La Alianza Hispana*, Records, 1965-1999, Box 13/87, Folder 13, Coalición Pro Liberación de Preso Políticos Puertorriqueños, Northeastern University.

⁵¹ The pages of *Claridad* in the 1970s and 1980s showcase the importance of the international struggle for the PSP. Soler, the leader of the US branch as of 1983, credits his late wife, Grace DuBreuil, for galvanizing support for antiapartheid work in PSP circles in the northeast US. For more on the PSP's international anti-imperialist networks, see series 3 of José A. Soler papers at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. For more on work with South Africa, see Larson, "José Soler: A Life Working at the Intersections of Nationalism, Internationalism, and Working-Class Radicalism. An Interview with Eric Larson."

⁵² These were major points of his eight-point program for his 1985–1986 run for state congress, for example. Jennings and King repeatedly noted how the new Black progressivism (epitomized by King, Jackson, and Harold Washington) was a progressivism in which the

international was seen as local. Central America intervention, Jennings wrote, had an effect on city life. See James Jennings, "America's New Urban Politics: Black Electoralism, Black Activism," *Radical America* 17, no. 6; 18, no. 1 (November 1983; February 1984): 35–40.

⁵³ Most Boston unions supported the mayoral candidacy not of Mel King but of Ray Flynn, an Irish American closely tied to South Boston and its campaigns of white resistance to school desegregation in the 1970s. In the 1983 campaign, Flynn attempted to cast himself as an economic populist and later won the mayorship.

⁵⁴ Holyoke, next to Springfield, was largely Puerto Rican and was on the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination's list of potential "riot" sites. Women, though, played important roles in the committee. Tess Ewing, a bus driver and independent leftist, was one of the most active member leaders. Tess Ewing, interview with the author, November 9, 2011, Boston, MA.

⁵⁵ Cruz worked closely with District 65 of the United Auto Workers. Though other *Colectivo* members saw less hope in unions, which Fuster characterized as white-dominated "brotherhoods," District 65 was a progressive local that preceded most unions in actively organizing Puerto Rican and immigrant workers in the city's growing service industry.

⁵⁶ Cruz, "Lares en Boston: 1984," *La Alternativa* 1, no. 4 (1984): 2.

⁵⁷ Hilda Lloréns, *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family: Framing Nation, Race, and Gender during the American Century* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014). Llorens draw from Arlene M. Dávila, *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico*, Puerto Rican Studies (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997). Carmen Dolores Hernández, *Ricardo Alegría: una vida* (San Juan, P.R.: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe: Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña: Academia Puertorriqueña de Historia, 2002).

⁵⁸ Lloréns, *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family*, 196–202.

⁵⁹ For instance, the cultural nationalism of the twentieth-century PPD (*Partido Popular Democrático*). Their imagery was certainly different from the "jíbaro" agrarianism of earlier nationalists. See Lillian Guerra, *Popular Expression and National Identity in Puerto Rico: The Struggle for Self, Community, and Nation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

⁶⁰ Martínez, interview with the author.

⁶¹ Iris Ana Garcia, "La Operación: Obligación o Decisión?," *La Alternativa* 2, no. 10 (April 1986): 2.

⁶² Martínez, interview with the author; see also the first issue of *La Alternativa* (1984).

⁶³ "Gloria Gonzalez Rivera: Luchadora Anónima," *La Alternativa* 2, no. 10 (April 1986): 3.

⁶⁴ Confidential interview with the author, September 9, 2012. (This member wished not to be identified by name.)

⁶⁵ Critiques of Boston's conservative and anticommunist Spanish-language media, mostly run by Cuban Americans, were scarce in *La Alternativa*, though Colectivo members often complained about their coverage.

⁶⁶ Juan Vargas, "'La Deuda' Puertorriqueña" *La Alternativa* 3, no. 20 (April-May 1987): 4.

⁶⁷ Rafael Quijano, "La T.V. Infantil," *La Alternativa* 3, no. 12 (June 1986): 3.

⁶⁸ Jorge Dávalos, "Ver para no Creer," *La Alternativa* 3, no. 12 (June 1986): 2; Efrain Collado, "Cable T.V.: Alternativa en Desarrollo," *La Alternativa* 3, no. 12 (June 1986): 3.

⁶⁹ Martínez, interview with the author.

⁷⁰ No author, "Sobre el Retorno a las Escuelas," *La Alternativa* 1, no. 3 (Sept. 1984): 1.

⁷¹ No author, "Historia del Festival," *La Alternativa* 1, no. 2 (July 1984): 1.

⁷² No author, "La Educación Bilingüe Se Queda," *La Alternativa* 2, no. 11 (May 1986): 1.

⁷³ Fuster, interview with the author. City Life/Vida Urbana was based in Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood near the Dorchester/Roxbury home site of El Colectivo.

⁷⁴ King's book is Mel King, *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development* (Boston: South End Press, 1981). See also Marie Kennedy and Chris Tilly with Mauricio Gaston, "Transformative Populism and the Development of a Community of Color," in *Dilemmas of Activism: Class, Community, and the Politics of Local Mobilization*, Joseph Kling and Prudence Posner, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 302–23. King reflected on variations of populism with Gaston and others, as noted in the acknowledgements.

⁷⁵ Padilla, interview with the author.

⁷⁶ In Boston, Citizens for Participation in Political Action, for example, had little relationship with anti-apartheid and emerged out of the "peace" movement in part. I reviewed their files in the Healy Library at University of Massachusetts, Boston.

⁷⁷ According to *La Alternativa*, around 100 came to the demonstration in front of the FBI building in Boston on September 23, 1985. Central America protests could turn out thousands. *La Alternativa* 2, no. 8 (October–November 1985): 3.

⁷⁸ Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, "The Struggle for Independence: The Long March to the Twenty-First Century," in *Colónial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico* (Boston, Mass: South End Press, 1993), 201–14.

⁷⁹ Crespo, et al. "Latinos refleccionan ante Memorial del Víctimas del SIDA," *La Alternativa* 23 (1987): 3.

Selected Bibliography

Alamo-Pastrana, Carlos. *Seams of Empire: Race and Radicalism in Puerto Rico and the United States*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016.

- Amy-Moreno del Toro, Angel. "An Oral History of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in Boston, 1972-78." In *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Voices from the Diaspora*, 246–58. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Ayala, César J., and Rafael Bernabe. *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Berberoglu, Berch. *The National Question: Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Self-Determination in the 20th Century*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009.
- Briggs, Laura. *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Carrión, Juan Manuel. "The National Question in Puerto Rico." In *Colonial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico*, 67–75, n.d.
- Clavel, Pierre. *Activists in City Hall: The Progressive Response to the Regan Era in Boston and Chicago*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010.
- Comité Seccional. "Resolución del Comité Seccional," 1982. José A. Soler papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 19. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections.
- Coss, Luís Fernando. "PSP Discute Su Rol En 1984." *Claridad*. July 22, 1983, sec. La Nación.
- Cruz, José. *Identity and Power: Puerto Rican Politics and the Challenge of Ethnicity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.
- Dávila, Arlene M. *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico*. Puerto Rican Studies. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.
- Farmer, Ashley D. *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*. Justice, Power, and Politics. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Foner, Philip Sheldon. *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902*. Modern Reader. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Gore, Dayo F. "From Communist Politics to Black Power: The Visionary Politics and Transnational Solidarities of Victoria 'Vicki' Ama Garvin." In *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, edited by Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard. New York: New York University Press, 2009.
- Gosse, Van. "'El Salvador Is Spanish For Vietnam': A New Immigrant Left and the Politics of Solidarity." In *The Immigrant Left in the United States*, 302–30. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Guerra, Lillian. *Popular Expression and National Identity in Puerto Rico: The Struggle for Self, Community, and Nation*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.
- Hamilton, Nora, and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla. *Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.
- Hernández, Carmen Dolores. *Ricardo Alegría: una vida*. San Juan, P.R.: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe: Fundación Puertorriqueña de las

- Humanidades : Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña : Academia Puertorriqueña de Historia, 2002.
- Higashida, Cheryl. *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1955–1995*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- Hobson, Emily K. *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left*. American Crossroads 44. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016.
- . “‘Si Nicaragua Venció’: Lesbian and Gay Solidarity with the Revolution.” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2012): 1–26.
- Jennings, James. “America’s New Urban Politics: Black Electoralism, Black Activism.” *Radical America* 17, no. 6; 18, no. 1 (November 1983; February 1984): 35–40.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.
- Kennedy, Marie, and Chris Tilly with Mauricio Gaston. “Transformative Populism and the Development of a Community of Color.” In *Dilemmas of Activism: Class, Community, and the Politics of Local Mobilization*, edited by Joseph Kling and Prudence Posner, 302–23. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
- King, Mel. *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development*. Boston: South End Press, 1981.
- Larson, Eric. “José Soler: A Life Working at the Intersections of Nationalism, Internationalism, and Working-Class Radicalism. An Interview with Eric Larson.” *Radical History Review*, no. 128 (May 2017): 62–76.
- Lloréns, Hilda. *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family: Framing Nation, Race, and Gender during the American Century*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.
- Mahler, Anne Garland. *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.
- Mari Bras, Juan. *El independentismo en Puerto Rico: su pasado, su presente y su porvenir*. San Juan, P.R.: Editorial CEPA, 1984.
- Martin, Bradford D. *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2011.
- Matos Rodríguez, Félix V. “Saving the *Parcela*: A Short History of Boston’s Puerto Rican Community.” In *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, edited by Carmen Teresa Whalen, and Victor Vásquez Hernández. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005.
- Mattos Cintrón, Wilfredo. “The Struggle for Independence: The Long March to the Twenty-First Century.” In *Colonial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico*, 201–14. Boston: South End Press, 1993.
- Meléndez, Edwin. “Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts.” In *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts*, edited by Meléndez and Miren

- Uriarte-Gaston, 15–37. Boston: The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, 1993.
- Nepstad, Sharon Erickson, and Christian Smith. “The Social Structure of Moral Outrage in Recruitment to the US Central America Peace Movement.” In *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, edited by Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Poletta, 158–74. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Olesen, Thomas. *International Zapatismo: The Construction of Solidarity in the Age of Globalization*. London, New York: Zed, 2005.
- Peace, Roger C. *A Call to Conscience: The Anti/Contra War Campaign*. Culture, Politics, and the Cold War. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.
http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.PMUSE_batch:muse9781613762042.
- Perla, Héctor. “Si Nicaragua Venció, El Salvador Vencerá: Central American Agency in the Creation of the U.S.: Central American Peace and Solidarity Movement.” *Latin American Research Review* 43, no. 2 (2008): 136–58.
- Placido, Sandy. “A Global Vision: Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and the Puerto Rican Liberation Struggle, 1931–1992.” PhD diss., Harvard University, 2017.
- Power, Margaret. “From Freedom Fighters to Patriots: The Successful Campaign to Release the FALN Political Prisoners, 1980-1999.” *Centro Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013).
https://www.academia.edu/3728158/From_Freedom_Fighters_to_Patriots_The_Successful_Campaign_to_Release_the_FALN_Political_Prisoners_1980-1999.
- Power, Margaret, and Julie A. Charlip. “Introduction: On Solidarity.” *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 6 (2009): 3–9.
- Prashad, Vijay. *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*. Verso Books, 2013.
- PSP, United States Branch. “Desde Las Entrañas ... Political Declaration of the United States Branch of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party,” 1973. José A. Soler papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 17. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections.
- Ramos-Zayas, Ana Y. *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Rodríguez, Ana Patricia. “The Fiction of Solidarity: Transfronterista Feminisms and Anti-Imperialist Struggles in Central American Transnational Narratives.” *Feminist Studies* 3–4, nos. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2008): 199–226.
- Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*. Latin America Otherwise. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Seccional, Comité. “Comité Seccional (organizational map),” circa 1983. José A. Soler papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 18. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections.
- Seda Bonilla, Eduardo. “Un Nuevo Racism Es Amenaza a La Continuidad Del Pueblo Puertorriqueño En La Historia.” *Lares: Grito Cultural* 7, no. 1 (1998): 5–8.
- Singh, Nikhil Pal. *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

- Smith, Christian. *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Springer, Kimberly. *Living for the Revolution Black Feminist Organizations, 1968–1980*. Durham, NC, London: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Stuelke, Patricia. "The Reparative Politics of Central America Solidarity Movement Culture." *American Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (September 2014): 767–90.
- Surbrug, Robert. *Beyond Vietnam the Politics of Protest in Massachusetts, 1974-1990*. Amherst, MA and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009.
- Torres, Andrés. "Political Radicalism in the Diaspora." In *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, edited by Torres and José E. Velásquez. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Thompson, Becky W. *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Uriarte, Miren. "Contra Viento y Marea (Against All Odds): Latina/os Build Community in Boston." In *Latina/os in Boston: Confronting Poverty, Building Community*, edited by Paul Osterman, et al., 1–34. Boston: The Boston Foundation, 1993.