

BOOK REVIEWS

Mirelsie Velázquez. *Puerto Rican Chicago: Schooling the City, 1940–1977*

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Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano coined the term “coloniality of power” to describe the way colonial forms of domination live on in postcolonial nations and metropolises. While his theory grew from the Latin American context, this framework also offers a useful lens for analyzing racialized inequality as it manifests in the United States, particularly in an age when the task of decolonizing education has assumed new prominence. While Americans don’t often like to admit it, the US was and is an empire.

Mirelsie Velázquez’s *Puerto Rican Chicago: Schooling the City, 1940–1977* reminds us of this fact, arguing that the form of schooling that Puerto Rican children received on the continent served as a continuation of colonial policies that began in the Caribbean in 1898. That was the year the United States assumed control of the island (more precisely, the archipelago) following the Spanish-American War and began imposing an English-language and Americanization curriculum on residents. Yet “coloniality,” Velázquez asserts, “including the experience of being subjugated to the will of an oppressive power—does not end when immigrants leave the colonized land and arrive in the colonizers’ territory” (p. 2). Those logics and practices often transfer to the belly of the beast, including its classrooms.

Velázquez’s important monograph offers a detailed account of these dynamics and “the centrality of schools and schooling in the life of the [Puerto Rican] diaspora” (p. 4), as a source of both oppression and liberation. Although Puerto Ricans, unlike other immigrants, arrived in the Windy City with US citizenship, that status did “not always offer the benefits of agency, access to resources, or a better way of life” (p. 5). To some city officials they were still seen as deportable and “perpetual foreigners.” As Velázquez argues, Puerto Ricans consequently turned to educational institutions to build their community, claim space, and assert their rights in a place where their racial, linguistic, and colonial identities marked them as second-class citizens, similar to and yet distinct from their Black and Mexican American neighbors.

Puerto Rican Chicago follows a chronological path, beginning with the early years of migration in the 1940s and ending in 1977, when a confrontation with the police erupted at the Puerto Rican Day Parade. The introduction provides a helpful overview

of Puerto Rican colonial and educational history, providing a clear illustration of how schooling's function of creating "acceptable citizenry" on the island followed migrants to urban centers like Chicago. Chapter 1 describes how city officials and media outlets initially welcomed migrants as upstanding newcomers fulfilling important labor needs, but also how Puerto Ricans faced structural discrimination in their "daily (and Daley) lives" (a pun in reference to the pro-segregation Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley) in the realms of housing, work, and education. They were also forced to navigate the city's charged racial politics, eventually occupying a precarious position as racialized minorities distinct from "White ethnics," but also not fully aligned with the African American community.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 analyze how the city's vision for the Puerto Rican community did not always reflect the community's views on what was best for itself, especially when it came to the education of Puerto Rican children. During the 1950s and early 1960s, city officials proved unable to comprehend the community's unique needs, repeatedly turning to English language acquisition as the silver bullet that would lead to integration and upward mobility. While some moderate groups like Los Caballeros de San Juan agreed with this myopic policy approach, others highlighted structural forces such as urban renewal and unresponsive teachers and curricula to understand why Puerto Rican children were struggling. The Puerto Rican high-school dropout rate throughout the 1960s and 1970s was an appalling 70 percent. Moreover, similar to school districts in other Northern cities, Chicago Board of Ed officials denied the city's problems with regard to racial segregation and resource inequity, prompting some Puerto Ricans to align with mobilized Black Chicagoans in the 1963 Public School Boycott. It would be civil unrest, however, that became the major catalyst for school reform for Puerto Rican Chicagoans. The 1966 Division Street riots prompted mass mobilization among Boricuas and forced city officials to recognize that Puerto Rican residents' needs were not being met.

After this uprising, Puerto Ricans organized throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, with schools serving as central advocacy sites for liberation and self-determination. Community control, culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum, and the hiring of more Puerto Rican teachers and administrators became rallying cries. In a richly textured portrait of life in a Puerto Rican neighborhood, Velázquez shows how Tuley High School served as an epicenter of contestation when the city advocated for the building of a new school building within Humboldt Park—one of the few public green spaces Puerto Ricans could lay claim to in the city. Chapter 4 helpfully eschews the all-too-common demarcation in educational scholarship between K-12 and higher education by focusing on Puerto Rican students at the city's leading Latinx-serving institutions, Northeastern Illinois University, and the University of Illinois Circle Campus (later named the University of Illinois at Chicago).

The importance of telling one's own story stands as a bedrock theme throughout the book, but assumes particular importance in chapters 4 and 5. An explicit discussion of archival silences introduces readers to the painful fact that Puerto Ricans often lacked the power to narrate their own lived realities. This denial of voice in turn diminished their ability to have a political say over their lives, mirroring the lack of representation and self-determination that plagued the island. For a time, research written by Puerto Ricans about Puerto Ricans had the stigma of being biased. For

that reason, the last two chapters of the book feel like a crescendo. By turning to publications like student newspapers, the Chicago Young Lords Organization's Liberation News Service, and the more mainstream *El Puertorriqueño*, Velázquez shows how "Puerto Ricans seeking a compelling portrayal of their own lives developed community-based and community-run publications to express their needs as workers, activists, and scholars" (p. 129). We finally hear what Boricuas had to say in their own words, particularly about their educational experiences, with all the nuance and complexity that inevitably arises within a group often treated as a monolithic "community."

Another great strength of *Puerto Rican Chicago* is the centrality of women to this history. Educational spaces existed as one of the few spheres where "women could gain a sense of power and control within the community" (p. 2). Readers are introduced to an illustrious cast of characters, including the upper-class young women who attended the University of Chicago and advocated for working-class Puerto Rican *domésticas* being exploited by unscrupulous labor contracts in the 1950s. One of these students included the daughter of Puerto Rico's famous postwar governor Luis Muñoz Marín, though the narrative could benefit from a richer engagement with what exactly that meant in the context of postwar Puerto Rican island politics. As the history moves into the 1960s, figures like Mirta Ramirez and María Cerda assume the spotlight. Ramirez became the influential founder of Chicago's chapter of *Aspira*, the New York-based Puerto Rican youth development and advocacy organization founded by another lioness of the Puerto Rican diaspora, Antonia Pantoja. Cerda, in turn, became the first Puerto Rican appointed to the Chicago Board of Education, and used her position to amplify Puerto Rican perspectives in the late 1960s. Carmen Valentín also enters the narrative as a radical teacher-turned-counselor active in school reform but also issues like Puerto Rican independence. Ultimately, Velázquez invites us to read the history of Puerto Rican education in Chicago through the lives of these women, and in doing so convinces us such an approach is imperative.

As with any good work of history, *Puerto Rican Chicago* invites readers to ponder new questions and avenues of inquiry. For one, the impacts of coloniality on racialized student populations in the metropole is a topic rich for further study, especially beyond the Progressive Era, where we already have a solid body of work demonstrating how colonial educational practices in places like Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii dialogued with schooling for African American, Indigenous, and immigrant populations on the continent. How might we apply a similar lens to migration spurred by US imperial intervention in later eras, involving the migrations of a wide range of groups, from Dominican to Vietnamese to Afghan children? A greater engagement with the literature on empire, education, and postcolonial migrations in other parts of the world could also conceptually inform scholars thinking through such questions in a domestic context, de-exceptionalizing the American imperial experience while also recognizing its particularities. Second, Velázquez joins a recent wave of educational historians focusing attention on various communities' educational experiences and contributions within Chicago, including Elizabeth Todd-Breland's *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s* and Mario Rios Perez's forthcoming *Subjects of Resistance*,

on education in transnational Mexican communities in the early twentieth century. Perhaps the next generation of educational historians can build on these works to provide a view of multiracial and multiethnic coalitions as they operated in one of the nation's largest cities, and analyze the conditions and policies that encouraged or diffused such alliances.

Puerto Rican Chicago provides an invaluable contribution to the history of education, urban history, and Latinx Studies. It reminds us that Latinx communities are richly diverse, not only located in the American West, and that their unique histories are crucial in narrating the development of twentieth-century American cities and schools. It also reminds us that, as scholars like Roland Sintos Coloma, Sonia Nieto, and Paul Kramer have emphasized, empire is a crucial category of analysis in the history of education and the United States.

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Mark Solovey and Christian Dayé, eds. *Cold War Social Science: Transnational Entanglements*

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What was Cold War social science? In the new volume, *Cold War Social Science: Transnational Entanglements*, coeditors Mark Solovey and Christian Dayé have assembled an insightful group—mostly of historians and sociologists housed in various programs related to science and technology studies in Canada, the United States, and Europe—to bring a new set of challenges to the confounding question. The volume builds on the work of its predecessor, *Cold War Social Science: Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature*, published in 2012 and also coedited by Solovey, by supplementing criticism of the monolithic category of “Cold War social science” with a new emphasis on the slippages and exchanges between nations that took place during the postwar era.

Solovey and Dayé list three goals for the project: first, to examine the factors and institutions that actively enabled transnational movements and exchanges in the social sciences during the Cold War; second, to understand how transnationalism shaped the development of social science work in various Cold War-inflected contexts; and third, to investigate how transnationalism in different Cold War settings inspired debate over fundamental questions concerning the nature and meaning of the social sciences.