

Enacting Intersectional Solidarity in the Puerto Rican Student Movementⁱ

Fernando Tormos-Aponte

On the morning of April 21st, 2010, hundreds of college students woke up ready to execute their decision to strike and occupy the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). For the next 62 days, they were able to disrupt regular operation of the Río Piedras Campus until the demands of the student movement had been met. While not the first attempt to shut down the university as a pressure tactic, it was the most successful mobilization executed by the Puerto Rican student movement. Why? What was different?

I argue that intersectional solidarity played a vital role. From 2005 to 2017, the Puerto Rican student movement shifted its agenda, leadership, and structure to include and prioritize the issues of intersectionally marginalized groups. Intersectional solidarity, which encapsulates both intersectional consciousness and praxis, enhances a movement's ability to broaden its base and exert political influence (Tormos 2017a). Adopting this organizing approach allowed the movement to sustain coalitions across different identity groups and increase their legitimacy in the public eye.

This chapter draws from my participant observation of the Puerto Rican student movement to examine the challenges and political consequences of enacting intersectional solidarities in social movements.ⁱⁱ I trace the processes by which the movement in defense of public higher education in Puerto Rico deployed an intersectional organizing approach and analyze its impact on Puerto Rico higher education policy. The first section of this chapter provides a brief introduction to the use of intersectionality for the study of social movements. In the second section I present the case of the Puerto Rican student movement, and, in the final section, I conclude by

discussing the challenges that the colonial condition presents for the movement demanding education as a human right in Puerto Rico.

Intersectional Solidarity and Social Movements

Social movements increasingly use intersectionality as a heuristic that informs their activist organizing approaches (Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016; Greenwood 2008; Laperrière and Lépinard 2016; Roberts and Jesudason 2013). As discussed in the introduction of this volume, intersectionality can be a means of cultivating broad and inclusive representation of different groups; a means of understanding and framing problems and solutions; and a means of facilitating and advancing coalition building. All of these are a part of what I refer to as intersectional solidarity, “an ongoing process of creating ties and coalitions across social group differences by negotiating power asymmetries” (Tormos 2017a). Intersectional solidarity requires an intentional consciousness that is attentive to multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and the marginalities it creates, but also a praxis that maintains and translates these concerns into action, both in the internal practices within the group, and in the external political actions. Below I address the importance of both an “intersectional consciousness” and an “intersectional praxis” as part of an intersectional solidarity model of mobilization.

Intersectional Consciousness

Intersectionality is a way of understanding how the social world is constructed that shapes individuals’ attitudes towards other groups and their propensity to engage in activism. Intersectional political consciousness stems from a person’s recognition of the intersecting systems of oppression that contour a person’s lived experience. While one’s membership in and self-identification with intersectionally marginalized groups is not a prerequisite for developing an under-

standing of inequality through the lens of intersectionality (Curtin et al. 2015), a subject's location at the intersection of multiple disadvantaged social groups may lead them to think critically and develop ways of bridging divides within activist collectives (Barvosa 2008). The value of intersectional awareness, Curtin et al (2015) argue, is that anyone can be aware of, and critique, intersecting forms of inequality.

Intersectional forms of solidarity and the durability of intersectional mobilization require the development of intersectional consciousness and awareness. These are based on individual and movement-wide sensibilities to differences that emerge among social groups due to their distinct lived experiences, which are conditioned by the interaction of multiple systems of oppression (Cole 2008; Greenwood 2008). Developing intersectional consciousness enhances movements as it attenuates the potentially negative effects of social movement diversity (Greenwood 2008). Movements driven by an intersectional consciousness and awareness recognize, represent, and provide spaces for the leadership and agency of intersectionally marginalized groups in collective action.

Intersectional consciousness can intensify activism and deepen engagement from multiple constituencies, particularly intersectionally marginalized activists (Greenwood 2008; Perry 2016). Despite the longstanding erasure of their work, intersectionally marginalized activists recurrently demonstrate the important role they play in movements, acting as political translators for their movements and communities (see the chapter by Nicole Doerr in this volume), doing the work of organizing movements at the frontline, and adopting leadership responsibilities in formal and informal social movement organizations (Cole 2008; Perry 2016). This political

translation and interpretive work facilitate the development of intersectional consciousness and awareness, and their enactment in practice.

Intersectional Praxis

An intersectional praxis refers to the actions that movements and individuals take to transform intersectional forms of oppression; it requires both recognizing *and* representing intersectionally marginalized social groups. Analyses of social movement organizations suggest that the adoption of an intersectional organizing approach enhances the likelihood of the longevity and political influence of mobilization (Tormos 2017b; Weldon 2006b). Previous scholarship on advocacy organizations has identified the pathways through which organizations may enact affirmative advocacy agendas that more adequately that reflect the agentic proposal of intersectionality (Strolovitch 2007). This entails improving the status of intersectionally disadvantaged groups within the organization, diversifying and making organizational leadership more inclusive of intersectionally marginalized groups, prioritizing the issues affecting disadvantaged minorities, and actually allocating organizational resources to advocate on intersectional issues (Strolovitch 2007, 11). Studies on social movement organizations forward similar proposals for reassessing organizational structures and practices in light of the agentic implications of intersectionality. These proposals include organizing an inclusive decision-making structure and leadership, supporting the autonomous organization of distinct social groups within the movement, and advocating for social policies that address intersecting forms of oppression (Laperrière and Lépinard 2016; Roberts and Jesudason 2013; Weldon 2006b). Studies that examine the enactment of intersectional forms of praxis include movements for economic justice for low-income

women of color (e.g., Carastathis 2013; Chun et al. 2013) and anti-racial and gender discrimination advocacy (e.g., Carbado 2013; Verloo 2013).

Understandings of oppression and practices to upend it inform each other (Cho et al 2013). Anti-oppressive movement groups have a priori understandings of oppression that evolve when they engage in collective action (Townsend-Bell 2011). A movement's openness to engaging in inclusive deliberations throughout the process of building and organizing social movements allows it to articulate agendas that address the issues of traditionally silenced subgroups within disadvantaged groups. While adopting inclusive deliberative norms may require significant investments of time and resources, enacting inclusive agendas secures the representation and continued engagement of intersectionally marginalized groups in social movements, thereby democratizing the movement, making it more legitimate in the eyes of the groups that they claim to represent, and increasing its likelihood of surviving over time (Doerr 2018; Tormos 2017b).

Education as a Human Right in the Context of Puerto Rico

Since 1898, Puerto Rico has been a non-incorporated territory of the United States. It has been under uninterrupted colonial rule for over four centuries. In May of 1901, the US Supreme Court decided in *Downes v. Bidwell* that Puerto Rico, "inhabited by alien races," was a territory belonging to the United States, but not a part of the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ This decision was among a series of Supreme Court decisions known as the Insular Cases. Together, the Insular Cases conferred Congress the power over the territory of Puerto Rico (Torruella 2013).^{iv}

Under this colonial regime, Puerto Ricans elected their own governor for the first time in 1944. In 1950, delegates elected to a constitutional assembly drafted the Constitution of Puerto Rico. The Constitution stipulates in its Bill of Rights that public education shall be a right of all

peoples, and that it shall be offered for free at the primary and secondary level.^v Since the 1960s, there is an identifiable tendency of framing social struggles as human rights struggles, both in Puerto Rico as well as at the global level (Colón Morera y Alegría Ortega 2012, 13; Moyn 2010). In fact, the language of human rights is codified in the Constitution of Puerto Rico and in legislation that offer protections against discrimination.

Historically, social movements in Puerto Rico have also adopted this language, as is the case of the Puerto Rican student movement, which recurrently calls for a broad interpretation of the Constitution of Puerto Rico, including the right to higher education. Despite its limitations (see for example Bilic 2016, 2017; Butterfield 2016; Stychin 2008), students found their voice in the discourse of human rights that reverberated in their marches and picket lines in the form of the chant “education is a right, not a privilege.” This discourse resonated with movement participants and the general population, grounding the movement’s demands in a language that lawmakers could understand and accept.

The Constitutional Convention that drafted the Constitution of Puerto Rico attempted to include a series of social justice provisions in Section 20 of the Bill of Rights. On March 3rd of 1952, 81% of votes approved of a version of the Constitution of Puerto Rico that included provisions on education as a right. As a result of the democratic deficit that characterizes the political status of Puerto Rico, the US Congress unilaterally amended the original draft of the Constitution of Puerto Rico to affirm that Section 20, which recognized certain social justice objectives, did not grant them judicially executable status (Ramos de Santiago 1970).^{vi} The Puerto Rican student movement has framed its struggle for education as a struggle for the right to education in spite of the US Federal government’s interpretation of the content of Section 20 as a social jus-

tice objective as opposed to a right granted to the Puerto Rican people by the Constitution of Puerto Rico.

Since its inception, the Puerto Rican government's enactment of social policies has been constrained by its colonial relation to the US federal government. The US government's unilateral elimination of Section 20 was one of the earliest examples of these obstacles. Yet, the Puerto Rican economy benefitted from injections of US capital and, from the mid-1970s until the mid-2000s, also from federal government incentives. Namely, from 1976 until 2006, Section 936 of the US Internal Revenue Code gave corporations tax exemptions from revenue generated in US territories. When these incentives phased out in 2006, corporations fled, leaving Puerto Rico unable to sustain social policy expenditures. In response to this crisis, Puerto Rican ruling parties began enacting a series of neoliberal policies, including privatizing public services and corporations (e.g. communications, transportation, water, and, most recently, electricity generation), and reducing social policy-related expenditures in the areas of healthcare, labor, and education.

The detrimental social impacts of these policies and the economic crisis have been pervasive for the population of Puerto Rico as a whole, but particularly for women, children, and nonwhite Puerto Ricans. Unemployment in Puerto Rico is consistently higher than in the US and per capita income is half of the per capita income in the US. In 2017, 43.5% of Puerto Ricans live in poverty while 15% of people in the US live in poverty.^{vii} In 2018, women's labor participation rate in Puerto Rico is 17% lower than the male labor participation rate.^{viii} Also in 2018, unemployment for youth ages 16-19 is 43.8% and 24.2% for those 20-24 years of age.^{ix} Fifty-six percent of children in Puerto Rico lived in poverty and 85% of children live in areas high in poverty in 2018.^x Sixty-one percent of children in Puerto Rico lived in single-parent

households and 53% of children have parents who lack secure employment in 2018.^{xi} In 2018, 13% of children in Puerto Rico were neither in school or working (highest in the US).^{xii} Non-white Puerto Ricans live in poverty at higher levels than self-identifying white Puerto Ricans, who also perform better in terms of job opportunities, income, wealth, and educational attainment (Vargas-Ramos 2016).^{xiii}

In the context of Puerto Rico, in which neoliberal austerity policies make access to education increasingly limited, the interplay between race, gender, and class dynamics have significant impacts on a person's social mobility. Below, I detail how the student movement went from pushing an agenda centered on the question of class to adopting an intersectional approach to mobilization. Intersectionally disadvantaged groups took it upon themselves to engage in the political interpretive work that rendered visible the ways in which educational access, widely considered to be an issue of class, intersected with gender and racial hierarchies to further obstruct life chances for disadvantaged subgroups within the working class and for those living in poverty.

Student Movement for the Right to Education in Puerto Rico

Over the past thirteen years (2005-2018), every Puerto Rican government administration has endeavored to address the fiscal crisis that afflicts Puerto Rico by cutting the budget of higher education or raising the cost of tuition, thereby igniting waves of student movement contention in 2005, 2010-2011, 2014, and 2017. The Popular Democratic Party (PDP) administration of Aníbal Acevedo Vilá (2005-2009) proposed tuition hikes shortly after its election to office, leading to the 2005 UPR strike. The PNP Fortuño administration's Law 7 changed the funding formula for the UPR, thereby reducing its funding, implemented a tuition fee, and proposed to eliminate tu-

ition waivers. The PDP García Padilla administration proposed a tax on private education and higher education budget cuts. In 2016, both the US-imposed Fiscal Oversight Board and the PNP Rosselló administration proposed substantial higher education budget cuts.

[INSERT TABLE 9.1 HERE]

The 2005 Wave

In 2005, the UPR Board of Trustees under the Aníbal Acevedo Vilá administration announced that it would increase tuition costs for the UPR. The UPR Río Piedras Student Council called for a student assembly in which students approved motions to go on strike and to form a student negotiating committee with representatives from each college, the Comité Universitario Contra el Alza (CUCA) or “the university committee against the raise.” Despite having representatives of students from each UPR Río Piedras College, the CUCA failed to adopt an intersectional organizing approach. CUCA leaders were criticized for having patriarchal, homophobic, and sexist approaches to mobilization (García Oquendo 2010). Moreover, the CUCA articulated movement discourses that centered on the working class and did not address how other disadvantaged subgroups within the working class were barred from gaining access to higher education. This discourse did not resonate broadly, including among the LGBTQ community and feminist groups (García Oquendo 2010). The CUCA also could not sustain a democratic decision-making structure that allowed for inclusive internal deliberations. The CUCA steering committee’s hasty approval of an agreement with UPR administrators without the consent of the plenary bodies that elected its delegates weakened engagement by multiple student movement groups. Ultimately, the CUCA’s agreement with university administrators did not block the tuition hike, but rather,

allowed students to defer the payment of tuition. As indicated by Table 9.1, the movement had a low level of influence on higher education policy in Puerto Rico. While it did not achieve the desired impact, the movement managed to push university administrators to allow them to defer the payment of tuition. Despite planting the seeds for future activist campaigns, the 2005 wave of contention was marked by a failure to sustain support across the diversity of groups that initially supported the movement. The failure to sustain solidarity across differences suggests that articulating a universalist, class-based discourse would curtail their ability to mobilize and sustain activist engagement from disadvantaged subgroups within the working class.

The 2010-2011 Wave

Upon its inauguration in 2008, the center-right PNP Fortuño administration (2008-2012) launched a resolute attack on the Puerto Rico public sector, curtailing the power of unions and dismantling social policies. In the context of higher education, the Fortuño administration proposed a 25% higher education budget cut, tuition hikes, and the elimination of all tuition waivers, which were awarded to honor students, university band musicians, student athletes, and student workers. The conservative Fortuño administration was resolved to deal a blow to public education and altered the funding formula for the UPR, leading to a reduction in the UPR's budget. In order to make up for the UPR's funding shortfall, the Fortuño administration pushed UPR administrators to request financing from the Puerto Rico central bank. This loan was conditioned on an increase in the UPR's revenue, which UPR administrators sought to achieve through imposing a new tuition fee of \$800 on UPR students and eliminating tuition waivers.

Most notably, the 2010-2011 campaign organizers learned from the strengths and failures of the 2005 wave. Student activist organizers at the UPR had worked on strengthening the

movement's organizational infrastructure since 2008 and diversifying movement leadership (Laguarta Ramírez 2016; Oquendo 2010; Rosa 2015). In 2008, veteran student movement organizers who had participated in the 2005 wave of contention proposed a successful resolution at a student assembly in Río Piedras to begin forming direct action committees, known locally as "Comités de Acción." These action committees met multiple times per month, organized assemblies in each of the university's colleges, engaged in deliberations, and mobilized students to demonstrations. Comités de acción created the capacity to sustain mobilization in a highly repressive context and in a context that was marked by social group and ideological differences among movement participants.

Student leaders also strengthened and diversified movement organizations by recruiting newcomers from socialist groups (Unión de Juventudes Socialistas, J-23, and Organización Socialista Internacional), activist performance groups (Papel Machete and Sembrando Conciencia), pro-independence groups (Federación Universitaria Pro Independencia, Juventud Hostosiana, and the Juventud del Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño), a feminist group (Colectivo Masfaldas), and the anti-discrimination and LGBTQ rights collective, Comité en Contra de la Homofobia y el Discrimen. During a student assembly, students agreed to have feminist and LGBTQ representatives in the movement's negotiating committee.^{xiv} This type of intersectional praxis allowed the movement to "find voice." Movement leaders articulated a discourse that recognized how class intersected with race to mediate access to higher education. This discourse resonated with multiple sectors of the student movement and the general population, drawing widespread support that became visible when people from multiple generations, political parties, ideological

perspectives came to the fences of the UPR to toss food, water, and supplies over to students in spite of the repression from riot police.

In a moment that marked a shift in the discourse deployed by the student movement, a Black working class student movement leader, Giovanni Roberto, delivered a speech in the middle of a conflict that emerged between students and young Black private security guards. A private security company had gone to the predominantly Black and poor municipality of Loíza to hire guards to keep the gates to the Río Piedras UPR campus open. In his speech, Roberto identified himself as Black and poor. Roberto criticized segregation in Puerto Rico as a manifestation of institutionalized racism. He told the security guards that they were not the enemies of the students. He described his personal history and said that this history of being brought up poor and Black is the reason for why the students were fighting for educational opportunities.^{xv} Students and guards embraced themselves at the end of Roberto's speech.

During the 2010-2011 wave of contention, students deployed a diverse tactical repertoire that included lobbying, direct action, disruption, and artistic performances.^{xvi} Most notably, the student movement launched strikes during the spring terms of 2010 and 2011 that spread across the vast majority of UPR campuses and succeeded in avoiding the elimination of tuition waivers. The 2010-2011 wave of contention marked a shift from the failure to adopt an intersectional approach to organizing during the 2005 wave, as the movement articulated intersectionally conscious political discourse and translated this consciousness into practice by diversifying its leadership. Student movement participants overwhelmingly approved diversifying the movement's leadership at a student assembly that drew more than 3,000 attendees. Electing the movement's leadership was the first issue in the agenda for the assembly.^{xvii}

The shift from the Fortuño to the García Padilla administration opened up new opportunities for the movement's political impact. While the Fortuño administration rejected negotiations with the student movement and repressed it heavily, the center-left opposition party PDP included in its platform a series of policies that mirrored student movement demands, such as the elimination of the tuition fees imposed by the Fortuño administration and freezing the funding formula for the UPR's budget (PPD Party Platform 2012, 154). The PDP exploited the Fortuño administration's questionable social and civil rights record on the campaign trail and included student demands in their platform in the 2012 election. Aiming to garner support from the left, the Popular Democratic Party (PDP) successfully challenged the Fortuño administration bid for reelection by including a repeal of a \$800 fee in its platform. Upon their election in 2012, the García Padilla administration eliminated the tuition fees imposed by the Fortuño administration and restored public funds to the UPR.

As stated in Table 1, during the 2010-2011 wave of contention the movement exerted moderate levels of policy influence, as it managed to block the university administration's proposal to eliminate tuition waivers but could not block the conservative Fortuño administration's \$800 fee. Upon the election of the center-left PDP administration in 2012, the movement was able to exert high levels of policy influence. The movement seized the opportunity to exert influence over education policy during the 2012 electoral shift from the conservative PNP administration to the center-left PDP government. The movement's ability to seize this opportunity was possible because the movement had managed to sustain the support of PDP youth groups in spite of their ideological differences with more radical groups, including the socialist, pro-independence, and feminist groups. Student movement leaders from PDP youth groups, like Manuel Na-

tal, used his good standing in the PDP party to push for the party's adoption of pro-movement proposals in its platform leading up to the 2012 election. Natal later became the first student movement leader to be elected to the Puerto Rico House of Representatives. Public higher education, however, was not safe from continued attacks.

The 2014 Wave

As the fiscal crisis became increasingly severe, barring the government from gaining access to foreign investment and lending, the center-left PDP's García Padilla administration (2012-2016) sought to impose austerity measures and a tax on education. Since 2010, public university student movement organizers recognized that their admission to public universities often stemmed from their privileges and that a hike in the cost of private higher education would also affect disadvantaged groups. Movement leaders of color and from working class backgrounds had risen to prominence and garnered widespread support for building a movement that advocated to keep intersectionally disadvantaged people enrolled in the university and to open the university to those whose lived experiences barred them from gaining admission and attending. The groups involved in the opposition to the tax on education included a disability rights student group (Comité de Apoyo de Estudiantes con Diversidad Funcional), and the student movement group, Juventud Hostosiana, which had developed an intersectional solidarity organizing approach and included this approach as part of its mission statement.^{xviii} At times, this form of intersectional solidarity met with the resistance of sectors of the movement that argued that the movement needed to focus on class issues, and specifically, the price of tuition in public universities.^{xix} Yet, since the 2010 wave of contention, intersectional consciousness and the commitment to intersectional praxis was more widespread amongst student activists, particularly within

groups involved in the student movement (e.g. socialists, independence movement groups, and most prominently, within feminist groups).

Students in the 2014 protests built on the strengths developed in the 2010-2011 wave and organized coalitions with activist student groups in private educational institutions. In contrast to the US mainland, wealthy students in Puerto Rico attend public institutions of higher education while less wealthy students attend private universities. The majority of university students in Puerto Rico attend private universities and 20% of students in private universities are enrolled in institutions that only offer technical and associate degrees.^{xx} Educational inequality, however, is not only a class issue, as self-identified White Puerto Ricans are more likely to attain higher levels of education (Vargas-Ramos 2016).

Despite not being threatened by the IVA tax on private education, public university student organizers demonstrated what Yuval Davis (1999) refers to as the practice of rooting and shifting. That is, “an exercise in empathy, in which participants bring with them a reflective knowledge of their own positioning and identity (rooting) but can also shift to put themselves in the situation of those with whom they are in dialogue and who are different from them” (Irvine et al. 2018, PAGE). The student movement managed to avoid the private education tax after aiding in the organization of activist groups in private universities and assembling a heavily attended march that took their disapproval of the private education tax to the Puerto Rico Capitol. The García Padilla administration was more open to negotiating with students than the Fortuño administration, and after a series of protests and advocacy efforts, dropped the proposed tax on private education. The 2014 wave showed that the student movement had adopted a praxis that engaged in politically influential mobilization beyond the realm of public higher education. Student

organizers, including those from privileged backgrounds, acted as bridge builders and political translators by articulating discourses that highlighted how the fiscal crisis would have pervasive effects on the lived experiences of young Puerto Ricans beyond the realm of public higher education.

The 2017 Wave

The political climate in which the student movement in Puerto Rico operated changed in June of 2016 when the US Federal Government passed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA).^{xxi} PROMESA gave a Fiscal Oversight Board appointed by the US President the authority over the territory's budget. Despite, the less hospitable climate, the movement maintained its commitment to intersectional solidarity, largely due to the work of Black and Queer women organizers, who rather than organizing separately, continued to press the movement to develop an intersectional consciousness. The student movement was among many sectors of the Puerto Rican civil society that decried the imposition of a Fiscal Oversight Board that stripped Puerto Rico of its fiscal autonomy. Recognizing that PROMESA gave overarching fiscal powers to the Fiscal Oversight Board, the student movement targeted both the Puerto Rican government and the Fiscal Oversight Board itself.

In January of 2017, the board asked Governor Rosselló and Legislature to cut 300 million dollars from its annual higher education budget, which makes up 27% of the budget for higher education, in order to comply with their requirements for approving a balanced budget.^{xxii} The Fiscal Oversight Board proposed reducing higher education funding by raising tuition and cutting faculty and administrator jobs, among other measures. In March of 2017, the board raised the proposed amount of funds to be cut from the higher education budget and asked the Governor

to increase the cuts to higher education over the next five years by 450 million annually.^{xxiii} Students quickly organized assemblies in which they approved a proposal to go on strike on April 5th, 2017. While the student movement succeeded in exerting some political influence, driving the Fiscal Oversight Board and the Governor to reduce the amount of funds that they originally proposed to cut from the higher education budget, the movement failed to avoid all budget cuts. Table 1 shows that the movement's level of policy influence in the 2017 wave of contention was low. In this highly repressive and anti-democratic policymaking context, the student movement did not achieve its desired outcome and, after a lengthy strike and a series of informal agreements with the UPR and Rosselló administration, students agreed to call an end to the strike in June of 2017.

Intersectional Solidarity

Over the past ten years, the student movement has been able to address internal differences and build capacity by developing an intersectional consciousness and adopting an intersectional solidarity approach. This entailed reforming its internal structure, adopting norms of inclusion for marginalized groups in the movement's leadership, and deepening its discourse for the right to education so as to emphasize the gendered, racial, and class dimensions of education. In the years leading up to the 2010 wave of contention, the movement developed an organizational infrastructure that relied on democratic decision-making norms. The movement's deliberative practices allowed it to 1) secure long term commitment to their tactical decisions, including contentious direct action tactics, 2) decide on the terms of the negotiations with university administrators and government officials, and 3) ratify agreements made during negotiations with their targets (Tormos 2018). Inclusive and deliberative practices allowed the movement to act politi-

cally (Irvine et al. 2018), which in this case entailed coping with divisive tactical choices and reaching agreements on movement proposals and demands.

Rather than continuing a tradition of elite, male-dominated, and pro-independence leadership, the movement learned from the experience of the 2005 Río Piedras strike and formed a negotiating committee that included a representative from the Committee Against Homophobia and Discrimination, a black working-class socialist student leader, and working-class women of color. The movement mirrored this inclusive and representative structure when it formed a national negotiating committee during the 2010 wave of contention. The development of a diverse and inclusive movement leadership was not the only demonstration of the movement's commitment to inclusion. The movement adopted norms of deliberation that democratized internal decision-making processes, thereby maintaining high attendance numbers at student assemblies and movement plenary sessions.

This diverse, inclusive, and democratic organizing approach allowed the movement to gain legitimacy in the public arena. Enactment of practices of democratic and inclusive internal deliberation in conjunction with work to develop a strong organizational structure allowed the movement to escalate its tactics and occupy the UPR's main campus for 62 days during the 2010 strike (Tormos 2018). Practices of democratic decision-making, inclusion, and diversity gave the movement the ability to counter the government's discourse arguing that the movement did not represent the student body. By 2010, the movement had created the capacity to deploy tactics that required vast investments of time, resources, and coordination. Organizers from the 2004 had learned from the challenges of their organizational blight and had built movement organizations in each college of the UPR Río Piedras Campus and in most of the UPR campuses. Re-

source mobilization scholars argue that most collective action is led and organized under the auspices of social movement organizations (Edwards and McCarthy 2004).

Government officials argued that a radical minority of the students led the movement, including leftist, “leaches” of the working class, and that a silent majority decried the movement’s tactics and demands. This majority, government officials argued, kept silent and did not attend student assemblies due to the intimidation tactics of radicals in the student movement who resorted to violence to push their leftist political agenda. Yet, during a nationally televised student assembly in 2010, the stage was set for dispelling the notion that the movement was not representative of the student body. Government officials were so convinced of their perception of the lack of support for the movement that they actively pushed for an assembly in which students could vote to ratify or to end the 2010 student strike, and provided the space for the assembly—the Puerto Rico Convention Center. Right-wing pundits and government officials argued that the movement always failed to achieve quorum in its meetings. On the day of the assembly, it was quickly evident that a large portion of the student body would attend. By the end of the assembly, movement members had successfully ratified the strike and seized the opportunity to march to the nearby Capitol building of Puerto Rico in San Juan.

Students in the 2014 protests built on the intersectional strengths developed in the 2010-2011 wave. Having found voice, they continued to engage in important cross-institution alliance formation that they could then translate into political action. They were well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the friendlier García Padilla administration.

During the 2017 wave of contention, the movement became increasingly intentional about adopting an intersectional approach to solidarity and advocacy. During the student assem-

blies leading up to the 2017 strike, feminist groups within the student movement, including the *Colectiva Feminista en Construcción* and the *Grupo de Trabajo de Género* (working group on gender), successfully proposed discussing first the adoption of movement demands that addressed the gendered dimensions of austerity measures (Ferrer Núñez 2017). Specifically, feminist groups and gender studies collectives aimed to shed light on the feminization of the workforce, gender-based violence, and the ways in which austerity measures affected individuals at the intersection of gender, race, class, and sexuality (Ferrer Núñez 2017). These discussions and the movement's support for prioritizing the issues of intersectionally marginalized groups not only reflected the movement's development of an intersectional consciousness but also its willingness to translate this consciousness into action. These shifts towards intersectional mobilization were the results of years of political analyses, interpretive work, and organizing led by queer, Black, and working class student leaders.

The intersectional organizing approach adopted in the 2017 wave of contention entailed further diversifying the movement's leadership and reassessing its advocacy agenda so as to better include the claims of intersectionally marginalized groups. The inclusive, representative, and democratic character of movement assemblies and plenaries allowed it to embrace tactical diversity and cope with traditionally divisive tactical decisions, such as striking and occupying the university as a form of exerting pressure on university and government administrations. Beyond the student movement, veteran activists spilled over into other anti-oppressive organizing efforts. Outside of student movement organizing, student activists joined and formed new groups that are guided by an intersectional solidarity approach, such as the *Colectiva Feminista en Construcción*. Moreover, veteran student organizers pushed their political organizations outside of the move-

ment to adopt intersectional feminist organizing commitments, as exemplified in the Juventud Hostosiana. Students also recognized the structural limitations to ensuring the recognition of their right to education and engaged in struggles to end Puerto Rico's colonial relation to the US.

The student movement's adoption of an intersectional approach to organizing bore fruits by enhancing its ability to cope with internal differences, maintain the support of different social groups within the student community while also mobilizing external support, draw resources from multiple constituencies, and gain legitimacy with elected officials and the general population. Moreover, the diversity of civil society groups that supported the movement allowed it to thwart the continuous government efforts to repress it. The development of intersectional consciousness, awareness, and praxis within the student movement fostered the practice of rooting and shifting and led student organizers to spill over into feminist, labor, environmental justice, agroecology, and human rights activist groups, and back into the student movement when it deployed new campaigns. While constrained by shifting political opportunity structure, adopting an intersectional solidarity organizing approach allowed the movement to sustain the support and engagement of marginalized groups while also allowing it to form alliances with powerful political actors without being subordinated to their strategies and goals, a risk that feminists have identified in the process of building alliances for intersectional activism (Friedman, 2000; Irvine et al. 2018, PAGE; Seidman, 1999).

Conclusion

The Puerto Rican student movement for the right of education faces a series of challenges due to the particular political and economic context in which it operates. Specifically, some of the major limitations to the political influence of the movement are the local governments' loss

of fiscal autonomy and Puerto Rico's colonial condition as a non-incorporated territory of the US. This particular political and economic context inhibits the Puerto Rican government from achieving the economic development that would enable it to fulfill the student movement's demand for education as a human right.

The Puerto Rican student movement has seized political opportunities to be politically impactful in a context characterized by electoral volatility. Piven and Cloward (1977) find that movements are likely to influence policy in times of electoral volatility. Yet, while the movement has been consistently influential, it has been constrained from achieving some desired policy outcomes due to the repressive character of the Puerto Rican political context, the fiscal crisis, and the local government's recent loss of fiscal autonomy under PROMESA. Ultimately, the colonial relationship of Puerto Rico to the US and its political economy in times of fiscal crisis have thwarted student efforts to move beyond resisting austerity policies to pushing for the enactment of policies that address intersectional inequality. The case of the Puerto Rican student movement confirms previous studies that argue that developing an intersectional consciousness and awareness at individual and movement levels is a project that may take years to achieve (Curtin and Stewart 2011). Further, the benefits of enacting intersectional forms of mobilization can enhance a movement's political influence, internal cohesiveness in contexts of social difference, and commitments to intersectionally marginalized groups, but they may also be undermined by political and economic circumstances that exacerbate the inequality that anti-oppressive movements seek to contest. Yet, beyond the limited opportunities in which the student movement operates, student activists have worked to strengthen movement capacity by enacting

internally the just, societal relationships that they seek to bring about nationally and by adopting an intersectional solidarity organizing approach.

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ⁱ I presented an earlier version of this paper written in Spanish at the 2015 annual conference of the Latin American Studies Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I have since translated the text to English. I thank my fellow panelists and discussants at LASA for their feedback, including José Javier Colón, Carmen Concepción, Héctor Martínez, and Luis Rivera-Pagán.

ⁱⁱ I was actively involved in the Puerto Rican student movement from 2008 to 2010. I participated in routine organizing committee meetings, work stoppages, the 2010 student strike, demonstrations, and media work (radio and social media).

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://cdn.loc.gov/service/ll/usrep/usrep182/usrep182244/usrep182244.pdf>

^{iv} *Balzac v. Porto Rico*, 258 U.S. 298, 309 (1922). "It is locality that is determinative of the application of the Constitution ... not the [citizenship] status of the people who live in it" (cited in Torruella 2013, 73).

^v Note that this provision of the Puerto Rican Bill of Rights does not use the language of citizens in its allocation of these rights, but rather, it grants these rights to education to all people. In doing so, it avoids regulating the borders of political membership within the issue of education.

^{vi} The Puerto Rican electorate's approval of this unilaterally imposed amendment was lumped together with the 1952 elections in Puerto Rico as a referendum. Puerto Rican civil society leaders questioned the fairness of such an act and the appropriateness of repeatedly consulting a Puerto Rican electorate that had overwhelmingly approved of the original draft of the Constitution.

^{vii} <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/pr/PST045217>

^{viii}<http://www.mercadolaboral.pr.gov/lmi/pdf/Grupo%20Trabajador/>

EMPLEO%20Y%20DESEMPLEO%20EN%20PUERTO%20RICO%20PROMEDIO%20A%C3%91O%20FIS-CAL%202016.pdf

^{ix}<http://www.mercadolaboral.pr.gov/lmi/pdf/Grupo%20Trabajador/>

EMPLEO%20Y%20DESEMPLEO%20EN%20PUERTO%20RICO%20PROMEDIO%20A%C3%91O%20FIS-CAL%202016.pdf

^x <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2018kidscountdatabook-2018.pdf>

^{xi} <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2018kidscountdatabook-2018.pdf>

^{xii} <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2018kidscountdatabook-2018.pdf>

^{xiii} https://centrop.r.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/data_briefs/RB2016-10_RACE.pdf

^{xiv} The Primera Hora newspaper chronicled the UPR strike day by day. It detailed the members of the student movement negotiating committee, which included members of the Committee Against Discrimination and Homophobia. See coverage at: <http://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/nota/huelgaenlauprdialminutoaminuto-382794/>. Periódico Digital Puertorriqueño La Nación also chronicled the 2010-2011 UPR strikes. The following article provides the composition of the negotiating committee and the movement's demands: <https://lanacionpr.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/exigencias-estudiantado/>.

^{xv} Roberto's speech is available at: <https://youtu.be/xXzpbYB7Ndo>

^{xvi} I observed each of these tactics deployed as part of my participant observation of the movement in 2010 and 2011. Moreover, I conducted interviews with students involved in lobbying efforts. These lobbying efforts are detailed further in the following article: <http://pr.indymedia.org/news/2010/11/45614.php>. Artistic performances are detailed with rich accounts and images in the following blog post: <http://www.multitudenredada.com/2010/05/huelga-creativa-2010-en-la-upr-la.html>. Direct action tactics are chronicled in the following article: <https://occupyca.wordpress.com/2010/12/11/government-establishes-siege-following-successful-strike-at-upr/>. Artistic performances during and after the strike are also elegantly exposed in the following text: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580a34e6b8a79beb0e953352/t/58582a8ee6f2e1582c8722eb/1482173097332/smArtActionCatalog.pdf>.

^{xvii} I attended and participated in this assembly. The following article documented occurrences at the assembly, including the election of the movement's leadership, setting movement demands, among other decisions: <https://lanacionpr.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/exigencias-estudiantado/>

xviii <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/nota/protestaranencontraderecortesaupr-1082352/>

xix Anonymous interview with student movement leader. 6/24/18

xx <http://www.upr.edu/?mdocs-file=6079>

xxi The text of PROMESA is available at: <https://juntasupervision.pr.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/PROMESA-Act-2016-ENG.pdf>

xxii The Fiscal Control Board's January 18th, 2017 letter containing its proposed cuts to higher education is available at: <https://juntasupervision.pr.gov/wp-content/uploads/wpfd/50/587fea840f998.pdf>

xxiii The Fiscal Control Board's March 9th, 2017 letter instructing Governor Rosselló to increase cuts to higher education is available at: <https://juntasupervision.pr.gov/wp-content/uploads/wpfd/50/58c1e7d75ab33.pdf>