

Racism in Puerto Rico

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Racism in Puerto Rico has been a major issue since the colonial era to the present. Historically, the island which is a U.S. territory, has been dominated by a settler society of religiously and ethnically diverse Europeans, primarily Spanish, and Sub-Saharan Africans. The heaviest burdens of racism in the country have historically fallen upon Native Americans, Africans and their descendants.

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History

When the gold mines were declared depleted in 1570 and mining came to an end in Puerto Rico, the vast majority of the white Spanish settlers left the island to seek their fortunes in the richer colonies such as Mexico and the island became a Spanish garrison. The majority of those who stayed behind were either black or mulattoes (of mixed race). By the time Spain reestablished her commercial ties with Puerto Rico, the island had a large multiracial population, that is up until the 1850s, when the Spanish Crown put the Royal Decree of Graces of 1815 into effect which "whitened" the island's population by offering attractive incentives to non-Hispanic Europeans. The new arrivals continued to intermarry with the native islanders.^[1]

Discrimination

Legacy

Contemporary Demographics

The current Puerto Rican population reflects the former immigration policy of 1815 conducted by the government in the 19th century, with hundreds from Corsica, France, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Christian Arabs from Lebanon). The religious breakdown in Puerto Rico (2006) is that 97% identify as Christian predominantly Roman Catholics.^[2] In the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Puerto Rico were asked to choose which racial category they self-identified with. The breakdown is as follows: white (mostly Spanish origin) 80.5%, black 8%, Amerindian 0.4%, Asian 0.2%, mixed and other 10.9%. Until 1950 the U.S. Bureau of the Census attempted to quantify the racial composition of the island's population, while experimenting with various racial taxonomies. In 1960 the census dropped the racial identification question for Puerto Rico but included it again in the year 2000. The only category that remained constant over time was white, even as other racial labels shifted greatly—from "colored" to "Black," "mulatto," and "other". Regardless of the precise terminology, the census reported that the bulk of the Puerto Rican population was white from 1899 to 2000.^{[3][3][4]}

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Categories: Puerto Rican society | Racism by region | Racism in North America

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