

March-
April
2026

LA VOZ EST. 2004
DEL PASEO BORICUA

¡Raja no se raja!
Rep. Krishnamoor-
thi presents bill to
abolish Junta in
Puerto Rico P. 8

No King! No
Colonies!
Call to action
July 4th P. 5

Costo de la
emigración para
envejecientes
boricuas 2da parte
P. 9

Paseo Boricua
celebrates Puerto
Rican Resilience
with Bad Bunny's
"Benito Bowl"



Dope Drip Café



Olla Barra Cocina • Lounge



La Bruquena Restaurant



La Casa del Domino



Chucherías Tropical Creations

VOTÉ BORICUA: MARTES, 17 DE MARZO, 6 A.M.-7 P.M.



About La Voz:

The most recent manifestation of Puerto Rican journalism in Chicago, La Voz del Paseo Boricua proudly continues in the legacy of our community's previous newspapers. Founded in 2004, La Voz del Paseo Boricua, or simply 'La Voz' as it is affectionately called by our readers, is a grassroots bilingual periodical published by the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center. We report on stories relevant to our community on a bimonthly basis, disseminating news about local events, programs, resources, and developments. As an alternative source of media, we seek to acknowledge the achievements of the Puerto Rican community at large and to advocate for the preservation of the heart of our barrio in Humboldt Park - our "pedacito de patria" in Chicago.

Sobre La Voz

La más reciente manifestación del periodismo puertorriqueño en Chicago, La Voz del Paseo Boricua continúa orgullosamente el legado de nuestros primeros periódicos. Fundado en 2004, La Voz del Paseo Boricua, o 'La Voz' según se le conoce cariñosamente por nuestros lectores, es un periódico de pueblo, publicado de manera bilingüe por El Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño Juan Antonio Corretjer. Bimensualmente, divulga historias relevantes de nuestra comunidad, disseminando noticias sobre acontecimientos, programas, recursos, y progresos locales. Como fuente alternativa de medios, intentamos reconocer los logros de la comunidad puertorriqueña al igual que abogar por la preservación del corazón de nuestro barrio Humboldt Park - nuestro "pedacito de patria" en Chicago.

OUR PRODUCTION TEAM



Xavier Isaias
COORDINATOR
xavieri@
PRCC-CHGO.ORG



Roberto Sanabria
PROOFREADER
robertos@
PRCC-CHGO.ORG



Luis Alejandro Molina
SENIOR ADVISOR
alejandrom@
PRCC-CHGO.ORG



Visit Our
Website

LSC Principal Candidate Forum: A Student Reflection

By Ciyandra Riley Davis

On February 2, 2026, Clemente High School held a candidate forum where two finalists for principal introduced themselves and answered questions from students and staff.

The first candidate, Doniesha Johnson, talked about her years of experience in Chicago Public Schools. She said she worked as a CPS vendor from 2015 to 2020. After that, she worked at Little Village High School, where she took on multiple roles and helped lead the volleyball team to two conference titles. She left Little Village in 2023. Johnson said her colleagues encouraged her to keep moving forward, so she completed a principal internship at a CPS elementary school. In 2024, she came to Clemente as an Assistant Principal.

The second candidate, Eric Flores, started by sharing his background. He said he comes from two immigrant families—Puerto Rican and Polish—and growing up in Chicago shaped how he thinks about community and support. Flores also described studying internationally, including time in schools in Japan. Later, he became an IB history teacher and gained more experience working in the International Baccalaureate program.

After the introductions, the candidates answered questions. One major question was: "How will you care for the emotional needs of parents, staff, students, and teachers?"

Johnson answered first. She said emotional support starts with building real relationships and being present. She emphasized an "open door policy," meaning students, staff, and families should feel comfortable coming to her whenever they need help. She also said it's important that everyone feels valued and seen.

Flores said he would build systems to track academic progress so the school can clearly see where support is needed. He also focused on teacher mental health, saying staff burnout is real and has to be taken seriously. For family-related issues, he said community outreach matters and promised to be prepared for future crises.

This article covers only the first part of the forum. The Local School Council is still discussing, and the final decision has not been announced yet.

Café Con Música students develop skills

On February 13th, Roberto Clemente's Media Program hosted its seventh musical showcase, Café Con Música. The event is led by media teacher Milton Tanco, a proud Clemente alumnus, and is fully produced and performed by students—either members of the media program or students from the school community.



Café Con Música provides students with the opportunity to perform in front of a live audience while giving media students hands-on experience producing a live event. From sound and lighting to stage management and promotion, students take an active role in every aspect of the production.

Experiences like these can spark lasting interests that grow into lifelong careers. Many program alumni have gone on to work in various areas of the media industry, and events like this ensure that future students continue to pursue their passions and develop into professionals.

Barrio Boriken Organizes National Day: No Kings, No Colonies - July 4th, 2026



From l to r clockwise, State Rep. María Isa Pérez-Vega, MN, José E. López, Melissa Mark Viverito, and Simon Trautmann, State Senate Candidate, MN.

Last weekend the Urban Theater Company hosted “Jolgorio Boricua en Humboldt Park: 250 Years without Kings, Tyrants, or Colonies” — an event centered on self-determination and sovereignty for Puerto Rico. It united local community members and representatives from seven states in conversation about the urgency, vision, and concrete paths for the island to move beyond its colonial status.

Convened by key, cross-sector, intergenerational activists of national and local importance, the Call to Action (see page 5) foregrounds the importance of Puerto Rico as a key to the present-day struggle against colonialism as part of the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the U.S. founding.

Ald. Jessie Fuentes (26th), Dr. Michael Rodríguez Muñiz, Michelle Morales, Juanita García Aviles, Luis Alejandro Molina and José E. López

gathered, along with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and over 50 members of the diaspora community gathered and enthusiastically discussed and plan the call for a July 4th, all-day celebration in Humboldt Park.

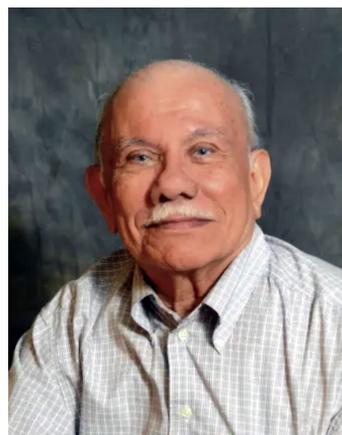
They were joined by State Sen. Omar Aquino, Chicago, IL (2nd District) State Rep. María Isa Pérez-Vega, MN (District 65B), Alderwoman Daniela Velázquez, St. Louis, MO (Ward 6) City Councilor Zaida Gován, Springfield, MA (Ward 8), City Councilor Angel Arroyo Jr., Lorain, OH (Ward 6), Simon Trautmann, State Senate Candidate, MN (District 51), Melissa Mark-Viverito, Former Speaker NYC Council, Efrain Elias, Illinois SEIU Local 1

Thank you to all who participated, to the PRCC staff, and to Urban Theater Company (@urbantheater) and Ola Barra Cocina Lounge (@Olasangrias) for generously opening their space.

Nuestro Sentido Pésame

El Centro Cultural expresa su más profundo y sincero sentido de pésame a nuestro patriota Alberto Rodríguez y a toda su familia, con motivo de la partida física de su querido padre, el Decano Manuel Rodríguez Torres.

Con respeto y solidaridad,
José E López



UN26 is a grassroots organization made up of working-class neighbors building collective power to improve the lives of poor and working families in our communities.

ACTION NEEDED

Support 100% Affordable Housing at 3251 W. Division

We need affordable housing champions! Sign the petition for a zoning change that will turn a vacant lot into 100% affordable housing for families and neighbors.

Scan the QR code to learn more details



un26ward@gmail.com



@unitedneighbors26

LUGAR DE VOTACIÓN: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/LA-VOZ-VOTER-INFO](https://bit.ly/la-voz-voter-info)

**CHICAGO
READER
BEST
ALDERPERSON
2025**

2026 IS OUR YEAR
TO DOUBLE DOWN.

Double down on our support for immigrants, affordable housing, tenant rights, harm reduction practices, community safety, and progressive policies that protect everyone.

I am proud to represent the 26th Ward because our movement is for the people by the people.

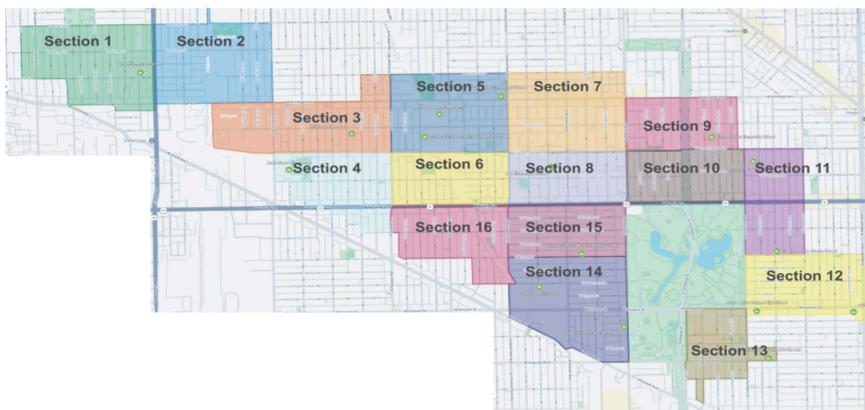
**JESSIE
FUENTES**



jessiefor26thward.com
@jessiefor26th



 **JESSIE FUENTES**
26TH WARD ALDERPERSON



UPDATED Street Sweeping Map 2026
Live map: bit.ly/26wardmap

 **CHI311**

311.Chicago.Gov

**TOP 311 REQUESTS
IN THE 26TH WARD**



GRAFFITI REMOVAL: 2,089
RODENT BAITING: 1,336
ABANDONED VEHICLE COMPLAINT: 997
GARBAGE CART MAINTENANCE: 950
DFSS SUPPORT: 728

TOTAL 311 REQUESTS COMPLETED:

19,498

¡BORICUA! ¡VOTA!: MARTES, 17 DE MARZO 6 AM - 7 PM

National Boricua Human Rights Network



250 Years: No Kings! No Colonies!-July 4, 2026

According to the official website of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission: *“On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey towards this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation’s past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond.”*

We ask: Will this celebration of 250 years narrate and commemorate the true history of the U.S.? Will it acknowledge and atone for U.S. colonialism and imperialism, including the 128-year colonization of Puerto Rico? Or will it silence this history, even as this country embarks on a new era of Manifest Destiny, evidenced in the recent military actions in the Caribbean and Latin America?

Harkening to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the United States’ imperial project is alive and well. We are deeply con-

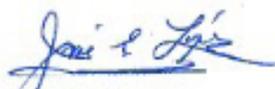
cerned about the future of the hemisphere and, in particular, our beloved Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans are at a crossroads. Will we demand our liberation, or will we submit ourselves to a fascist and anti-democratic empire in decline?

- A call to conscience
- A call to action
- A call for creative resistance

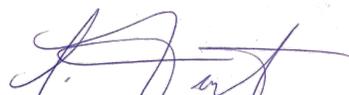
We cannot determine our future. We have no participatory, transparent process of decolonization, particularly as the U.S. imposed the PROMESA Oversight Board—“La Junta”—continues its decade-long rule of the archipelago. It is no coincidence that colonial oversight boards, following the model of Puerto Rico, are now being proposed to further the U.S. neocolonial goals in Palestine/Gaza, Venezuela, and Greenland—with Trump as the colonial overlord.

Today, Puerto Rico is the oldest colony in the world, and the only Spanish-speaking country in the Western Hemisphere that is not sovereign. Puerto Ricans’ long-denied right to self-determination—the freedom to choose how we define the status of Puerto Rico—and its future is what we seek to call for on July 4th, 2026.

On behalf of The National Boricua Human Rights Network (NBHRN), we want to invite you to an envisioning meeting on February 28th at 10 am, to discuss the July 4, 2026 event to be held in Humboldt Park, Chicago—Barrio Borikén—El Jolgorio Boricua: 250 Años Sin Rey y Sin Colonias. This will not be just another political rally or march but a creative cultural and political demonstration in defense of Puerto Rico’s right to self-determination, self-actualization, and self-reliance. And, during which, we celebrate our solidarity across the hemisphere to confront war in the Americas.



José E. López



Ald. Jessie Fuentes



Michelle Morales



Michael Rodríguez Muñiz



Juanita García



Luis Alejandro Molina

LUGAR DE VOTACIÓN: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/LA-VOZ-VOTER-INFO](https://bit.ly/la-voz-voter-info)

A Powerful Evening of History and Dialogue: NMPRAC's Sold-Out Book Talk with Jorell Meléndez Badillo

Reflection by Anthony Milián

There are moments when history no longer feels distant, but alive — present, urgent, and breathing in the room. On Friday, February 20th, my conversation with historian Jorell Meléndez Badillo about his book *Puerto Rico: A National History* became one of those rare and powerful moments.

Since October, I've had the privilege of hosting the inaugural Boricua Virtual Book Club for the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture. What began as a shared commitment to read and reflect together culminated in a sold-out Book Talk, where more than 135 people gathered in person—including Book Club members who traveled from New York, Atlanta, South Carolina, Florida, Wisconsin, and across the diaspora—to engage in this powerful dialogue. Together, we witnessed Prof. Meléndez Badillo receive NMPRAC's *Plantando Bandera* Book Award.

For more than an hour, we spoke not simply

about dates or events, but about power, memory, and the long shadow of colonialism that still shapes Puerto Rican life today. What became clear very quickly is that Puerto Rican history is too often narrated through the ambitions of



empires rather than through the lives of Puerto Ricans themselves. Jorell's work insists on correcting that imbalance. He tells a story where Puerto Ricans are not passive subjects of Spain

or the United States, but active agents shaping their own political and cultural destiny.

We moved across centuries, but the conversation never felt trapped in the past. We talked about migration, labor, and resistance, about the ways identity is formed under pressure, and about how culture becomes both refuge and weapon. When we spoke about Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, known to the world as Bad Bunny, it was not as a celebrity aside but as evidence that history travels through music, language, and pride. Culture carries memory forward when institutions try to erase it.

What stayed with me most was the reminder that history is not an academic exercise. It is a tool for dignity. It is a way of saying we were here, we are here, and we will define ourselves. Conversations like this do not just teach history. They restore it.

Photo credit: Elias Carmona-Rivera

SAVE
- THE -
DATE

Annual Wellness Day on Paseo Boricua

Saturday, June 6, 2026

11:00am-3:00pm

WORKOUT



GIVE
AWAY!



Dancing



health
screenings

Food

BARRIO
BORICUA

THE
PUERTO RICAN
CULTURAL CENTER

Call or email for more
info. on how to
Reserve a space
773-342-0855
Leonyc@prcc-chgo.org

Save
THE
Date

48TH PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE'S DAY PARADE SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2026

12:00PM
ON PASEO BORICUA

Desfile del Pueblo Puertorriqueño

BARRIO
BORICUA



THE
PUERTO RICAN
CULTURAL CENTER

• TO BE PART OF THE PARADE
• TO ADVERTISE IN THE PARADE
CALL OR EMAIL:
773-342-0855 Prpeoplesparade@prcc-chgo.org

¡BORICUA! ¡VOTA!: MARTES, 17 DE MARZO 6 AM - 7 PM



ROBERTO CLEMENTE COMMUNITY ACADEMY

ENROLL FOR THE FUTURE! PREMIER PROGRAMS OPEN.

CTE PATHWAYS



ALLIED HEALTH

Kickstart your career in medicine.
Accredited courses.



CULINARY ARTS

Master the kitchen.
Professional training.
Commercial kitchen experience.



BROADCAST TECH

Behind the scenes.
Television and media production.

IB PROGRAM

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB)

CHALLENGE YOURSELF.
GAIN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE.

- RIGOROUS ACADEMIC CURRICULUM
- GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP
- CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
- ADVANCED COLLEGE PREP
- WORLD-WIDE RECOGNITION

WWW.RCCACHICAGO.ORG



WWW.RCCACHICAGO.ORG

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF EXCELLENCE. ENROLL NOW!

EARN A DEGREE to catapult your career to the next level!

START YOUR JOURNEY AT EL CENTRO

Northeastern Illinois University El Centro offers a unique start to your college experience, guiding you through your first semester and beyond.

SMALL CLASS SIZES

Enjoy personalized attention and build real connections—our small classes make learning more engaging and supportive.

BILINGUAL STAFF

Feel right at home with our welcoming bilingual team ready to help you and your family every step of the way.

CONVENIENT LOCATION

Study close to home with easy access—El Centro is right here in Avondale, saving you time and stress.

EL CENTRO SCHOLARSHIPS

Unlock exclusive scholarship opportunities that make your education more affordable and accessible.

Family-Like Setting

Join a warm, supportive community where you're more than just a student—you're part of the El Centro familia.

CONNECT WITH US

We'll help you discover all that is available at Northeastern Illinois University El Centro.

Phone: (773) 442-4080
Email: elcentro@neiu.edu

neiu.edu/elcentro

APPLY TODAY

Scan the QR code to apply and learn more about the admissions process, financial aid opportunities and more.

neiu.edu/apply



EL CENTRO



¡NUESTRA MISIÓN ERES TÚ!



ROBERTO CLEMENTE COMMUNITY ACADEMY

A NEW FUTURE, A NEW VISION,
A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION IN
OUR COMMUNITY

LSC ELECTIONS

MARCH 18TH, 2026



1147 N. WESTERN



6AM -7PM

*** 2 FORMS OF ID NEEDED TO VOTE ***



- ✓ GLENDA GUZMAN/COMMUNITY REP
- ✓ LEONILDA CALDERON/COMMUNITY REP
- ✓ KATHIRIA SALGADO/PARENT REP
- ✓ BEATRIZ ORTIZ/PARENT REP
- ✓ ANGEL HERNANDEZ/PARENT REP

LUGAR DE VOTACIÓN: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/LA-VOZ-VOTER-INFO](https://bit.ly/la-voz-voter-info)

BARRIO BORIKÉN WELCOMES REP. KRISHNAMOORTHY TO CELEBRATE HIS BILL TO ABOLISH FISCAL CONTROL BOARD

Marking 10-year anniversary of federal law, close to 100 Boricua small business owners, civic leaders cheered for next U.S. Senator from IL

by Federico de Jesús

CHICAGO, IL — On Friday, Chicago's Puerto Rican leadership welcomed **Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-8)** to the **Barrio Borikén**, the culturally designated district also known as Puerto Rico Town in historic Humboldt Park, and praised him for introducing legislation to put an end to the fiscal control board that has been squeezing working Puerto Rican families, including many of the loved ones of our Chicago Boricua community. Organizers say close to 100 community members said *presente* at the event.

Chicago's Puerto Rican community, including restaurant owners, and other small business entrepreneurs, cheered “¡Raja no se raja!” as the Congressman pro-

claimed he would abolish ICE, fight for Puerto Rican democracy and give a voice to Chicago's working Puerto Rican families in Washington, DC. Boricuas in attendance waived Puerto Rican



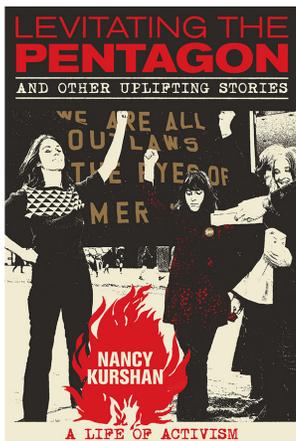
flags and expressed their pride as former **Congressman Luis V. Gutiérrez** spoke about Raja's courage in introducing historic legislation to begin the process of returning democratic rule and sovereignty to Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Rican Agenda Co-chair Natasha Brown said: “Today is a momentous occasion for our community. We gather to recognize the courage of Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi for intro-

ducing this legislation that calls for the end of the fiscal oversight board imposed on Puerto Rico – what many of us know as “La Junta Imperial.”

The event held at Wepa Mercado del Pueblo, comes a day after **Representatives Krishnamoorthi (IL) and Darren Soto (FL)** introduced the “**Puerto Rican People's Power Restoration Act of 2026**” in the United States Congress that would abolish the fiscal control board that has ruled Puerto Rico for the past decade.

“Across the country, many are calling for 250 years without kings or tyrants. Here in the heart of the Puerto Rican Cultural District of Humboldt Park, we add our own call: ‘**¡250 años sin reyes, sin tiranos y sin colonias!**’ 250 years without kings, without tyrants and without colonies!” Brown added.



Levitating the Pentagon... Nancy Kurshan's memoirs

Book signing, Sat. April 4th, Mercado (2559 W. Division St.), 2 pm

In *Levitating the Pentagon and Other Uplifting Stories*, longtime activist Nancy Kurshan offers a vivid, woman's-eye view of seven decades of radical social change. From the founding of the Yippies and the theatrical feminist resistance of W.I.T.C.H., to solidarity work with political prisoners and indigenous liberation movements, Kurshan's life chronicles the evolution of the U.S. Left—from civil rights to antiwar to feminist, abolitionist, and internationalist struggles.

Kurshan was not just a witness—she was a key player. She marched at the first major Vietnam War protest in D.C., co-organized the

1967 “levitation” of the Pentagon, and ran the streets of Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. She was in court for the Chicago 8 Conspiracy Trial. She traveled to North Vietnam in 1970, and returned four decades later as an honored guest.

More than a memoir, *Levitating the Pentagon* is a vital historical document and a passionate call to action, grounded in an ethic of humility and truth.



¡BORICUA! ¡VOTA!: MARTES, 17 DE MARZO 6 AM - 7 PM

PART 2

GROWING OLD ALONE: How Puerto Rican Migration Reshaped Family Care

Mass migration and accelerated aging have transformed how older Puerto Ricans are cared for. Today, thousands of families split that responsibility between Puerto Rico and its diaspora in the U.S., with cities like Chicago becoming emotional and logistical extensions of the island.

By Vanesa Baerga | Centro de Periodismo Investigativo

Elías Carmona Alejandro never imagined that death would find him far from Puerto Rico. As terminal cancer eroded his cognitive abilities, the devoted admirer of Puerto Rican culture and jíbaro music spent his final three months in Chicago, where he died in 2024 at 79.



A photo of Elías Carmona Alejandro that his son keeps in his Chicago apartment. Photo by Vanesa Baerga | Centro de Periodismo Investigativo

His adult children, Sandra and Elías Carmona Rivera, 50 and 52, said they were grateful that their father’s condition kept him from realizing he had been taken to Chicago for treatment.

“He never knew he was outside the island. If he had been aware, he would have wanted to die in Puerto Rico. We would have wanted that transition to happen on the island,” said Sandra.

Like many contemporary Puerto Rican families, Carmona Alejandro’s immediate family network was shaped by migration, particularly during

the last 15 years of his life.

While Sandra remained in Puerto Rico and settled in Loíza, a coastal town on the island’s northeastern shore, his son Elías is among the more than 700,000 working-age Puerto Ricans estimated to have migrated to the United States over the past two decades, according to the U.S. Census. He settled in Humboldt Park, the heart of Chicago’s Puerto Rican community and a major hub of the diaspora since the mid-20th century.

While Puerto Rico has lost a significant share of its working-age population, the proportion of older adults on the island has grown rapidly. According to U.S. Census data, that share rose from 13% in 2010 to 21% in 2019. This shift has created a reality in which nearly 70% of older adults’ children live outside the island, said Puerto Rican demographer Amílcar Matos Moreno, a professor and postdoctoral researcher



Puerto Rican demographer Amílcar Matos Moreno has spent years studying how migration affects Puerto Rican families caring for older relatives.

Photo by Vanesa Baerga | Centro de Periodismo Investigativo

at Penn State University’s Center for Healthy Aging. In his view, the combination of accelerated migration, a lack of accessible services and outdated public policies leaves many older adults alone or dependent on care coordinated from the diaspora, a phenomenon that is redefining aging on the island.

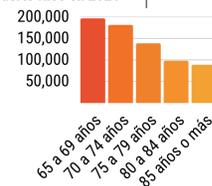
“If you have three children, two of them are expected to be living outside the island and one to be here in Puerto Rico,” Matos Moreno said. “If you have one child, the odds that they live

Se estima que dos de cada tres hijos de un adulto de 65 años o más vive en la diáspora (2021)

Un estudio de proyecciones poblacionales encontró que en el caso de personas que tienen menos de tres hijos, con mucha probabilidad estos viven fuera de Puerto Rico.



Grupos de edad de 65 años o más residiendo en Puerto Rico en 2021



Fuente: Estudio sobre estructuras de parentesco para adultos mayores dejados atrás en contextos de alta emigración: evidencia de Puerto Rico (2025) y el Estimado del Censo federal de la población de 2021 a cinco años



abroad are much higher . If you have two children, one — or perhaps both — are likely to be living outside the island.”

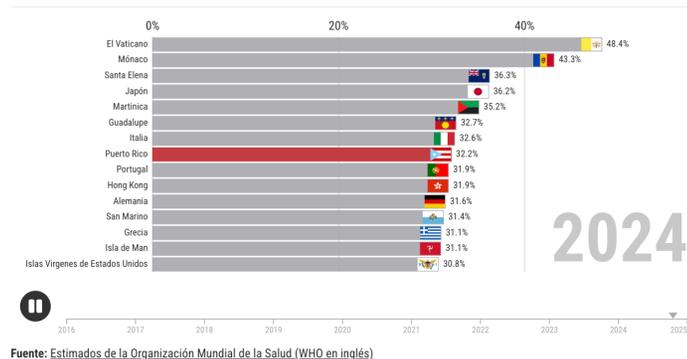
The figures Matos Moreno cited come from the academic paper “Kinship Structures for Left

CONT. FROM PG 13

Behind Older Adults in High Outmigration Contexts: Evidence From Puerto Rico,” published in 2025 in *The Gerontologist*, a peer-reviewed journal on aging. The study focuses only on daughters of older adults, but Matos Moreno said the research team, which included Puerto Rican demographer Alexis Santos Lozada, is updating the model and has found the same pat-

Los 15 países con mayor proporción de personas de 60 años o más (2016 a 2025)

Según los estimados de la Organización Mundial de la Salud, Puerto Rico pasó del puesto 23 en 2016 al octavo en 2025.



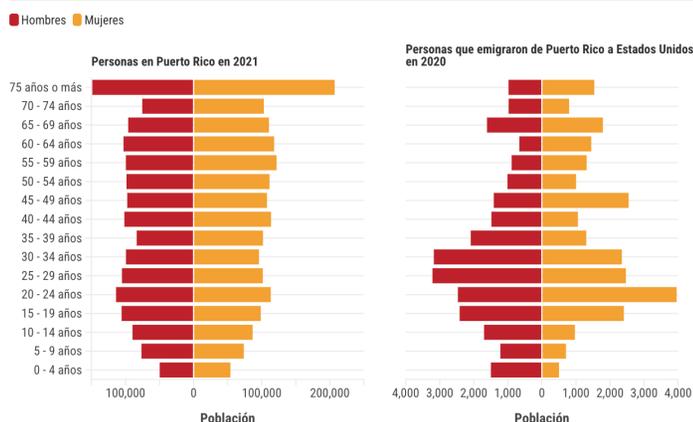
Fuente: Estimados de la Organización Mundial de la Salud (WHO en inglés)

Made with Flourish · Create a bar chart race

terns apply to children of all genders. lished in 2025 in *The Gerontologist*, a peer-reviewed journal on aging. The study focuses only on daughters of older adults, but Matos Moreno said the research team, which included Puerto Rican demographer Alexis Santos Lozada, is updating the model and has found the same pat-

En 2021, los adultos jóvenes habían emigrado de Puerto Rico a Estados Unidos en mayor proporción

Mientras, en la estructura poblacional de Puerto Rico solo destaca el agregado de grupos de edad de 75 años o más, así como la reducida población entre las edades de 25 y 39 años.



Fuente: Perfil del Migrante, Instituto de Estadísticas · Nota: La Encuesta de la Comunidad del Censo estima la población de emigrantes hacia los Estados Unidos al preguntar dónde vivían hace un año. El Instituto de Estadísticas de Puerto Rico utilizó microdatos (PUMS en inglés) de la encuesta que corresponden a una muestra del 1% de la población y se ponderan para representar al total del país.

Made with Flourish · Create a chart

terns apply to children of all genders. According to 2025 World Health Organization data, Puerto Rico ranks eighth worldwide in the share of residents ages 60 and older, at 32.3%. Only Vatican City, Monaco, the British overseas territory of St. Helena, Japan, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Italy rank higher.

Matos Moreno called the figures alarming. As fertility rates fall and life expectancy rises, older populations are growing worldwide, he said, but Puerto Rico faces the added strain of accelerated migration. That combination has changed how older adults who remain on the island are cared for, reshaping family dynamics and the emotional, social and practical supports they rely on, especially in their final years.

A Farewell Far From Home

In 2023, shortly after his wife's death, Carmona Alejandro was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome, a blood and bone marrow cancer that can progress to acute myeloid leukemia. At the time, his daughter was his primary caregiver in Puerto Rico, balancing full-time work with raising two teenagers.

As the disease progressed, caring for Carmona Alejandro became increasingly complicated and expensive, prompting Sandra and her brother to look for other options. They explored services through San Juan's municipal homemaker program and an elder care facility, but Sandra said costs at the facility “didn't go below \$3,000 a month.” In the process, she used up the sick leave she had accumulated at work, and the search for care for her father remained fruitless.

experience manager at the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, Elías suggested to his sister that they bring their father to the city to continue treatment. They made the arrangements and found a long-term care facility in Chicago's Puerto Rican community that accepted his Medicare coverage and could



Elías Carmona Rivera walks past the long-term care facility in Chicago that took in his father during his final months, after cancer had already impaired his cognitive abilities. Photo by Vanesa Baerga | Centro de Periodismo Investigativo

admit him in his fragile condition. The facility — geared toward older Hispanic adults in Chicago — also had Spanish-speaking staff, an important detail because Carmona Alejandro did not speak English.

Carmona Alejandro arrived in Chicago on Sept. 13, 2024. He was admitted to the long-term care facility, where a nurse, a primary care physician and an oncologist had already been assigned to him. The facility transported him to medical appointments, and his son met him there. That support made coordinating his care far easier: Unlike his sister in Puerto Rico, his son in Chicago did not have to miss work repeatedly to look after their father.

“Back in Puerto Rico, I had to miss work to pick him up, take him to appointments, wait with him for five or six hours, and then wait for the referrals so he could see the oncologist and get

terns apply to children of all genders.

From Chicago, where he works as a visitor

CONT. FROM PREVIOUS PG.

treatment,” said Sandra.

The Carmona Rivera siblings take some comfort in knowing that, in his fragile condition, their father never realized he was in Chicago. They said that when they took him out for lunch at Dominican eateries in Humboldt Park — where merengue played and servers spoke with the cadence of a Dominican accent — he believed he was back on the streets of Santurce, the San Juan neighborhood he had walked all his life.

Accelerated Migration

Between 2000 and 2020, Puerto Rico’s population fell sharply. The island went from 3.8 million residents in 2000 to 3.2 million in 2020, according to U.S. Census data.

The steepest drop came between 2010 and 2020, when migration to the United States accelerated dramatically and Puerto Rico lost 11.8% of its population — about 440,000 people — according to the U.S. Census.

Perfil del Migrante 2021-2022, a report by the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, estimates that the median age of people who emigrated over those two decades was 30. Researchers have largely attributed the outflow of working-age adults to the economic crisis that began in the mid-2000s, compounded by the devastation of Hurricanes Irma and María in 2017, according to the 2021 research brief “Migration is the Driving Force of Rapid Aging in Puerto Rico: A Research Brief,” co-authored by Matos Moreno and Santos Lozada.

The Void Left by Distance

Most older adults whose children live outside Puerto Rico — or are otherwise absent from their lives — experience it as a kind of grief or loss, said Matos Moreno and María Arroyo Bermúdez, a social worker at Hogar Santa Te-

resa de Jornet in Cupey, a neighborhood in San Juan. In some cases, Arroyo said, those absences can affect cognitive functioning, memory and mood, and may even contribute to depression, especially among older parents.

Of the 110 residents at Hogar Santa Teresa de Jornet, Arroyo said about 10 are older adults whose children live outside Puerto Rico, leaving another relative or a designated guardian legally responsible for them. In such cases, she said, the family members who remain on the island must step in and, together with the assisted-living facility, play a critical role in their care.

“The most important thing is for the family to have a plan and organize a support network of friends or relatives to accompany the older adult,” the social worker said.

Arroyo noted that older adults with children or close relatives living abroad experience more intense feelings of emotional isolation and loneliness.

“There are many older people who wait for a phone call that never comes, or who expect a visit from a son or a sister on a certain date, and then no one shows up,” she said. The lack of companionship to run errands or keep appointments — such as medical visits — is a major concern, Arroyo added, and a source of added stress for older adults who live alone.

Although many families try to stay connected and offer emotional support through phone calls, video chats and other digital tools, that contact does not always translate into practical help, Matos Moreno said. The loss of hands-on support, he added, can take a toll on older adults’ health, making it harder for them to access medical care or adequate nutrition.

“We’re talking about things like, ‘Can you take me to the corner store?’ or ‘Can you pick up my

prescription?’ — things that may seem minor,” the researcher said. “But for an older adult with mobility limitations or some degree of cognitive impairment, these are essential tasks where family members used to play a crucial role.”

Family Support From Afar

For Ana Belaval, a Puerto Rican journalist and news anchor at Chicago television station WGN-TV, 2025 was a particularly difficult year. From afar — and during frequent trips to



Puerto Rican journalist Ana Belaval, center, with her parents, Mario and Anaví. Belaval works for a Chicago television news station, while her parents live in San Juan. Photo courtesy of the family

Puerto Rico — she watched her parents’ health decline. Her mother, Anaví, 86, has Parkinson’s disease and relies on a wheelchair. Her father, Mario, 87, has begun to show signs of cognitive decline.

After her mother was diagnosed with Parkinson’s in 2017, Belaval decided her parents would no longer travel to Chicago and that she would instead visit them in San Juan, where her brother also lives. That way, if a health emergency arose, her parents would be close to their doctors.

Because of her parents’ advanced age, Bela-

val chose to travel to Puerto Rico every three months to support her brother, Mario, who manages their parents' day-to-day care.

When she is not in Puerto Rico, Belaval tries to stay as connected as possible to her parents through phone calls.

“The hardest part has been that no matter how much I try to help, I’m not there in Puerto Rico,” said the 51-year-old journalist.

Belaval believes taking care of her parents “is what you do” — a responsibility you accept. She grew up visiting her grandmother once a week and watching her mother look after the older adults in the family. Being far from her parents left her feeling guilty and wondering how she could help.

At first, she tried to ease that guilt by searching for items that might make life easier for her parents — bed rails, lidded cups — and ordering them online to be shipped to Puerto Rico. It was a way to feel useful from a distance.

Now, Belaval says she is at peace with her parents' decision to stay in Puerto Rico, though one challenge she has noticed during her trips to help care for them is the shortage of specialists with available appointments.

For their part, her parents prefer to remain in Puerto Rico, close to their doctors, their other son, their friends and their social life.

“My mother told me, ‘If I lose my mind and don’t know where I am, then you can take me to Chicago,’” Belaval recalled.

Two Homes, One Root

With distance and limited access to affordable caregiving services, many Puerto Rican families find themselves juggling improvised arrangements to care for aging relatives. In some cases, that collective effort means returning to the island to provide care or accompanying parents who choose to grow old where their lives began.

That was the case for the Valderrama Ocasio family, part of Chicago’s long-established Puerto Rican diaspora. They found ways to ensure their father, Rafael Fernando Valderrama, who died last month at 92, was always accompanied by one of his children.



Caption: Before Rafael Fernando Valderrama died in December 2025, his seven children (six are shown) divided his care for years between Chicago and the town of San Sebastián in Puerto Rico. Photos by Herminio Rodríguez | Centro de Periodismo Investigativo

Don Fernando, as he was known in his hometown of San Sebastián in western Puerto Rico, arrived in Chicago in the 1950s. There he met Gloria; they married and raised a family, but he always held on to the dream of returning to Puerto Rico. When Gloria retired in 1981, the couple bought a house in San Sebastián, near the Buenos Aires neighborhood in the nearby town of Lares, where she had grown up. The purchase set in motion a pattern of back-and-forth migration between the Windy City and

Puerto Rico.

After Don Fernando’s wife died in 2012, the family decided to honor his wish to spend at least half the year at the home in San Sebastián and the other half in Chicago, where six of his seven children live. The arrangement required careful coordination of everyone’s schedules.

Starting with his 80th birthday, Don Fernando’s children also coordinated annual trips — each going separately — to San Sebastián to care for their father.

“We couldn’t have him climbing onto the roof, doing electrical work, so we started coordinating the trips,” said Adrián, 51, the youngest son.

For 12 years, every January, Don Fernando traveled from Chicago to Puerto Rico with one of his daughters. The next month, one sibling would arrive and another would leave, a rotation that continued through June, when Don Fernando returned to Chicago with one of his daughters. The family plan also included video calls among the siblings to discuss new approaches to caring for the family patriarch.

“We went to San Sebastián to enjoy my dad — the peace and quiet, morning cravings, the food we bought out or cooked together,” said Nilda Valderrama,

69, the oldest daughter. “We shared his tastes and his TV shows.”

For the family, caring for their father in the home he bought more than 40 years ago, hoping to reconnect with Puerto Rico, became a collective mission.

“As long as he could go (to Puerto Rico), if we could take him, we took him,” said Amalia, 68, the second-oldest of the Valderrama Ocasio siblings.



Loneliness and Abandonment

Not all older adults, however, have a large and committed support network. As Puerto Rican families have grown smaller, Arroyo Bermúdez and Matos Moreno said, many older adults are left alone because their children leave in search of jobs and higher wages they cannot find on the island.

In 2017, after a decade living in North Carolina, Carlos A. Rodríguez returned to Puerto Rico to help rebuild homes after Hurricane Maria. Rodríguez founded The Happy Givers, a non-profit that serves people in vulnerable situations by providing food, employment, community support and sustainable development programs. Through the organization's work, Rodríguez realized most of the cases he was seeing did not

involve families or children, but older adults living alone in precarious conditions.

“When you drive through the mountains, through rural areas — through Morovis or Utuado — you see what look like abandoned houses. But older adults are living inside those houses,” he said.

Rodríguez called the situation for older adults in Puerto Rico “grim,” and he agreed with Arroyo that the main problems they face are loneliness, sadness and abandonment. He said he has even paid for the funerals of some of the older people he has helped “because there’s no one else in the family to take responsibility.”

From 2017 to 2024, about 4,000 older adults were abandoned at hospitals in Puerto Rico, according to data the Puerto Rico Department of the Family provided in 2024.

Among the people Rodríguez regularly assists — through The Happy Givers or through La Cocina Social, an initiative that provides healthy



meals to older adults several times a week — are those whose children emigrated, as well as others who, after retiring, dreamed of returning to Puerto Rico. But Rodríguez said many come

back alone, without their children, and no longer have the support networks they once had on



the island decades earlier.

“Of course, they love Puerto Rico — they want to hear the coquí at night and go back to the places where they used to eat alcapurrias,” Rodríguez said, referring to the island’s iconic frog and a popular fritter. “But the system doesn’t work for them, and they return to suffer.”



The Puerto Rico Department of the Family said it recognizes the challenges older adults face, particularly isolation and difficulties managing basic day-to-day tasks. In written statements sent by the agency’s press spokeswoman, Yolanda Rosaly Alfonso, the department said changes in family dynamics require “a much more active response” from the government, municipalities and community organizations, though it did not

specify what that response would be.

The department said the absence of a nearby caregiver directly affects an older adult's stability and safety. Among the challenges it cited was a shortage of "people willing to work as homemakers, caregivers or in-home aides," as demand for those services has increased. "There aren't enough available or trained staff" to fill those roles, the department said.

Even so, for fiscal year 2025, the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico authorized \$15 million for the Homemaker Program in 64 municipalities. For fiscal year 2026, the board authorized \$199.4 million to fund services for older adults, including \$18.1 million for the Department of the Family's homemaker services and \$15 million for municipal programs to operate the Homemaker Program in 60 municipalities.

According to information the Department of the Family shared with the Centro de Periodismo Investigativo (CPI), the agency currently provides in-home aide services — also known as homemaker services — to 1,533 older adults who have no other support. A news report said the 2024-2025 Joint Budget Resolution served 314 older adults in 30 of Puerto Rico's 78 municipalities. The Homemaker Program offers eligible participants assistance with meals, personal care, household chores and health-related needs.

"We work hand in hand with municipalities, which play a crucial role in wellness checks, transportation to medical appointments and community support activities for older adults who do not have family on the island," the department said, adding that the collaboration has been essential in filling the gaps left by weakened family networks.

Intergenerational and Multigenerational Housing

To address the problem, Matos Moreno said public policy strategies should focus on the precarious conditions many older adults face, reflect today's family realities and confront the accelerated outmigration of working-age people. Among the approaches he highlighted is intergenerational housing that pairs older adults with university students — a model used in the Netherlands and in senior living facilities in cities such as Lyon, France, and Cleveland. In those places, collaborative agreements between senior residences and universities provide students with housing, while students offer companionship and daily interaction in return.

"It's a form of community service that helps students stay in school without the financial burden, while also sharing with an older adult and activating the social contact we all need," Matos Moreno said.

Another option the academic proposed is multi-generational housing — arrangements in which two or more households from different generations within an extended family live under one roof while maintaining some independence. One example, he said, is converting a home's second floor so grandparents or other relatives can live there, offering mutual support, companionship and shared expenses. The arrangement can also ease financial pressures by splitting utility costs and, in some cases, sharing the cost of purchasing a home — an approach that could be encouraged through government incentives, Matos Moreno said.

"It's an investment so that older adults are healthier and suffer less," he said. "It wouldn't be an added cost to Medicaid or Puerto Rico's public health plan. It would mean a more functional, healthier person. We have to see it as an investment in the future."

Such housing could also make it easier for older adults to live with their children and grandchild-

dren — and in some cases help middle-aged parents care for young children, he added. Although Puerto Rico's government has not formally proposed these strategies, the Department of the Family, through its spokeswoman, described them as "excellent initiatives." The agency's secretary, Suzanne Roig Fuertes, was not available for an interview, and the CPI was denied entry to a news conference where she was expected to appear.

Insufficient Efforts to Slow Accelerated Migration

Matos Moreno said the only government effort in the past decade "clearly aimed at addressing" Puerto Rico's demographic situation was the Plan de Reto Demográfico (Demographic Challenge Plan), a government report first published in 2011 that describes population aging and projected demographic shifts. According to the academic article "Reflexión sobre el Plan de Reto Demográfico y su impacto en la política pública de Puerto Rico," by Julio César Hernández Correa, a professor of agricultural economics at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez, the report was proposed by a Demographic Challenge Committee that included representatives from government agencies, academia and the private sector.

The committee was created after the Legislature approved Puerto Rico's 2010 Demographic Challenge Act, with the goal of developing a plan to identify and craft strategies to address demographic change and the needs of different groups within the population. The report, the article noted, was intended to align Puerto Rico's central government agencies around the demographic challenges facing the island. Matos Moreno, however, warned that the initiative "was never followed through and became just another report." The plan laid out recommendations for how government agencies could respond to Puerto Rico's demographic challenge, but it was never implemented after

agencies were left to define and carry out the recommendations on their own.

Among the public policies the government has adopted in recent years that could help blunt accelerated demographic change, Matos Moreno pointed to a law offering incentives to retain and bring back medical professionals, income tax deductions for each child and the Vivienda Joven program, which offers eligible residents ages 21 to 35 financing to buy a home in Puerto Rico. He said the housing program could help retain — and potentially increase — the number of young adults who want to return to the island and purchase property. Still, Matos Moreno and Santos Lozada, along with University of Puerto Rico economist José Caraballo Cueto, agreed that so far none of these incentives has solved the problem of rapid population decline among working-age adults or the island's accelerated aging. They attributed that largely to the absence of metrics to measure effectiveness and to what they see as a lack of sustained government effort to reverse recent demographic patterns.

“Strategies have to be designed to encourage demographic change,” Matos Moreno said. “Changing fertility patterns and migration patterns on an island isn't easy, but it is possible.”

For Matos Moreno, the answer begins with services and public policies that respond to the needs of today's population. Faced with shifts as profound as those of the past two decades, he added, the government must prepare to confront challenges experts have documented and warned about for years.

“Public policy has to focus on the Puerto Rico we have, not the Puerto Rico we wanted when people said we were going to be four million,” Matos Moreno said. “There's so much public policy that could be put in place to create the conditions that would encourage people to stay. If we focus on those who are here in Puerto Rico and can provide a dignified living and a decent quality of life, the others — those who left — will come back. That's always the migration debate.”

This report was made possible by a fellowship from the Centro de Periodismo Investigativo's Journalism Training Institute.

This translation was generated with the assistance of AI and reviewed by our editorial team to ensure accuracy and clarity.



HITN

honors

Women's History Month

During Women's History Month, we recognize the contributions of women and reaffirm our support for equity and opportunity for all.



hitn.tv



PROGRESSIVE VOTER GUIDE PRIMARY - MARCH 17, 2026

The Primary Election is Tuesday, March 17th

Las elecciones primarias se celebrarán el martes 17 de marzo.

Polls open 6am - 7pm // Las urnas estarán abiertas de 6am a 7pm.

★ **(14) KARINA VILLA**
Illinois State Comptroller

(31) DELIA RAMIREZ
U.S. Representative, IL-03

★ **(38) ANTHONY DRIVER, JR**
U.S. Representative, IL-07

(61) GRACIELA GUZMAN
State Senator, IL-20

(61) OMAR AQUINO
State Senator, IL-02

★ **(71) LILIAN JIMÉNEZ**
State Representative, IL-04

★ **(81) EIRA LIZETH CORRAL SEPULVEDA**
Commissioner 6-year

★ **(82) PRECIOUS BRADY DAVIS**
Commissioner 6-year

★ **(83) BETH MCELROY KIRKWOOD**
Commissioner 6-year

(85) CAMERON "CAM" DAVIS
Commissioner 2-year

★ **(91) TONI PRECKWINKLE**
President of County Board

★ **(101) JESSICA VÁSQUEZ**
Commissioner, 8th District

(101) TARA STAMPS
Commissioner, 1st District

★ **(112) JUANITA IRIZARRY**
Board of Review, 1st District

(132) STEVEN Q. MCKENZIE
Judge of the Circuit Court

★ **(133) LUZ MARIA TOLEDO**
Judge of the Circuit Court

★ **(136) MICHAEL CABONARGI**
Judge of the Circuit Court

(137) AVA GEORGE STEWART
Judge of the Circuit Court

(138) D'ANTHONY "TONY" THEDFORD
Judge of the Circuit Court

★ *Indicates Contested Candidate*

Early Voting begins Monday, March 2
La votación anticipada comienza el lunes 2 de marzo



Early Voting Site // Lugar de votación anticipada:
Humboldt Park Library, 1605 N. Troy St

***UPDATE* VOTE BY MAIL** ballots must be mailed by
Tuesday, March 10 in order to ensure arrival.



ACTUALIZADO Las papeletas de **VOTO POR CORREO**
deben enviarse antes del **martes 10 de marzo** para
garantizar su llegada.