

Speech before the Board of Fiscal Control

March 31, 2017

Dra. Ilia Rosario Nieves

Profa. Elsie Ruiz Santana

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico

Good afternoon members of the Board and general public. Thank you for this opportunity where we will be presenting a summary of the most important findings of our research *The Impact of Migration in Puerto Rico*. The research methodology consisted of reviewing literature, consulting the data base of the Office of the Census of the United States, specially the Community Poll, and official documents of the government of Puerto Rico. This is an analysis of the data from all these sources oriented towards the search for social, family, socioeconomic, demographic and moral impact of migration. We have to keep in perspective that migration is a global situation and that Puerto Rico is inserted in it.

Between nineteen hundred (1900) and nineteen ninety (1990), the highest migration movement in Puerto Rico occurred in the fifties (50's) where almost one million puertorricans left the island with a

persistent increase of fifty seven thousand four hundred and seventy one (57,471) each year up to eighty nine thousand (89,000) in two thousand fifteen (2015).

Some of the historical reasons that motivate puertoricans to migrate are:

1. Changes in the economical status of Puerto Rico
2. Increase in unemployment
3. Ample opportunity to travel at low fares.
4. Political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States (Planning Board of Puerto Rico nineteen eighty six (1986).

From two thousand (2000) to two thousand fifteen (2015), one million puertoricans migrated to the United States. The highest flow of emigrants was in the years two thousand six (2006), two thousand eleven (2011), two thousand fourteen (2014) and two thousand fifteen (2015). Between two thousand ten (2010) and two thousand eleven (2011) there were nineteen thousand nine hundred two (19,902) emigrants, but since two thousand fourteen (2014) there has been a gradual increase in this number.

Between two thousand five (2005) thru two thousand fifteen (2015), seventy seven percent (77%) of the emigrants were either high school dropouts, or with a high school degree and maybe some

university courses. Twenty three percent had bachelor's, master's or doctoral degrees. Although the flow of emigrants has been constant, there also has been thousands that have returned to the Island. Even though the number of emigrants with a university degree has increased, this population only represents one percent (1%) of the total emigration population. The highest percentage are low income families that leave, usually leaving behind their elder parents.

This research reveals facts that contradict the projection of a massive brain drain from Puerto Rico. The vast majority of the puertorican emigrants have a very low level of education. After comparing the data over the decades, the migration of educated emigrants with a higher income is one percent (1%).

The gender of the emigrants show changes from year to year. In (2005) two thousand five, the Institute of Statistics started to identify and account for the emigrants' gender. Women were at the top of the list for the years two thousand five, two thousand six, two thousand nine and two thousand thirteen (2005,2006, 2009, 2011 and 2013). Men were at the top of the list for the years two thousand seven 2007, two thousand eight (2008), two thousand ten 2010, two thousand twelve (2012) and two thousand fourteen (2014).

Another fact that resulted from the analysis of statistics was an absolute increase in the proportion of women emigrants. In nineteen sixty (1960), women represented forty seven percent (47%) of the total amount of migrants. In the past forty (40) years, more women migrate as independent emigrants in search of work, instead of dependents that are part of a family. Between nineteen ninety eight to two thousand twelve (1998-2012), women were fifty six percent (56%) of the emigration population, and the Caribbean and Central America were the regions with the highest percentage, sixty one percent (61%).

From two thousand five (2005) to two thousand fifteen (2015) the highest portion of emigrants were children and young people. The highest age percent was for the ages between five (5) and nineteen (19) years and represented twenty nine percent (29%) of the emigrant population. This means that complete families, mainly consisting of young people, were moving. People between the ages of forty (40) and fifty nine (59) years only represented eighteen percent (18%) of this population and people over sixty (60) years of age represented eleven percent (11%) of the emigrants.

The population returning to the island from two thousand five (2005) to two thousand fifteen (2015) was three hundred fifty seven thousand eighty four hundred forty two (357,842). Although in two

thousand fifteen (2015), eighty nine thousand (89,000) puertoricans left the Island, that same year twenty thousand one hundred eighty nine (20,189) people returned.

The data analysis shows that the amount of people that leave the Island daily has constantly increased. In two thousand (2000), around one hundred fifty seven (157) people migrated every day to the United States. In two thousand fifteen (2015), up to two hundred forty four (244) people migrated daily.

Between two thousand five (2005) to two thousand fifteen (2015), seven hundred sixty one thousand nine hundred thirty five (761,935) puertoricans have migrated. In the same period, three hundred three thousand, eight hundred fifty nine (303,859) have returned to Puerto Rico and fifty three thousand nine hundred eighty three (53,983) have settled in Puerto Rico from other countries. Therefore, although for that decade over seven hundred thousand had migrated from the Island, three hundred fifty seven thousand eight hundred forty two (357,842) have come and settle in Puerto Rico. That leaves a net migration of four hundred four thousand ninety three, (404,093).

Another fact that affects the population is the births. Since two thousand (2000) there has been a decrease in births. In (2000) two

thousand there were fifty nine thousand four hundred sixty (59,460) births and in two thousand fourteen (2014), thirty four thousand four hundred eighty five (34,485). One of the reasons for these numbers is the amount of young women migrating from the Island and the number of elderly adults returning to Puerto Rico. Deaths also show a slight increase: twenty eight thousand eight hundred seventy nine (28,879) in (2000) two thousand and thirty thousand three hundred four (30,304) in (2014) two thousand fourteen.

From (2005) two thousand five to (2015) two thousand fifteen most immigrants informed that they had never married, the next group in number informed they had married, in third place were those that informed they were divorced or separated, and the smaller group informed they were widows.

Migration impacts in different ways. Among the most significant are the social, cultural, economic, educational and health effects. The most important economical effect is the immigrants money transfers to their families. In (2006) two thousand six, the money transfers to Puerto Rico were four hundred eighty nine million dollars while in (2015) two thousand fifteen were three hundred forty one million dollars.

Emigration has also shown a decrease in school enrollment in Puerto Rico, both in the public and the private system. In (2000) two thousand, the enrollment in the public school system was six hundred three thousand three hundred fourteen (603,314) while in (2015) two thousand fifteen was three hundred seventy nine thousand eight hundred eighteen (379,818). Enrollment in higher education institutions in Puerto Rico has also decreased over the past fifteen (15) years. In (2001) two thousand one there were seventy three thousand eight hundred thirty eight (73,838) students enrolled, while in (2015) two thousand fifteen there were sixty two thousand five hundred twenty three (62,523) students.

It is of vital importance for the academic community to profoundly examine the causes and consequences of the migration phenomenon so that solutions can be found and curriculums be reviewed so they will answer to the multiple situations that arise from migratory mobility. Migration will not stop and there is urgent need for public policies that will deal with this reality.

Regardless of the immigrant's status, they need help in that process. This help has to come from the government, the church, and from the host city. As a result of this investigation, there is a recommendation for the government of the Commonwealth of Puerto

Rico to establish an agency that works solely for the immigrants. The immigrant needs a support network in the host city, and the returning immigrant needs to reconnect with place of birth, particularly when he/she has been away for decades.