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Writing Puerto Rican Public History: Ethnic Studies Curriculum in Connecticut

Elena Marie Rosario, University of Michigan

Abstract

In 2019, the Connecticut State Legislature passed Public Act 19-12, *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Black and Latino Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*. Before Public Act 19-12, community activists of color made several attempts to push for the inclusion of Ethnic Studies in public high schools in the state, and the history of Puerto Ricans and other communities of color in the state provides context for the Act's passage and implementation. Through multiple methods, this article explores ways to produce curricula that preserve and archive local history. The author draws on literature from history, Puerto Rican Studies, Engaged Pedagogy, and Ethnic Studies. Moreover, she discusses the goals, objectives, and processes employed to design her lesson plans that support Connecticut's new curriculum. One of the author's lesson plans serves as a case study for her to reflect on effective ways to write Ethnic Studies high school curricula about communities of color. This article concludes by reflecting on the author's experiences.

Keywords: Curriculum development, public history, Connecticut, Puerto Rican Studies

Introduction

In June 2019, the Connecticut State Legislature passed Public Act 19-12, also called *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Black and Latino Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*. Connecticut students, teachers, educational organizations, and many more advocated for the legislature to pass the course. The Connecticut Legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, founded in 1976, also supported the Act (Black & Puerto Rican Caucus [BPRC], 2020). CT Public Act 19-12 (2019) states that "each local and regional board of education shall include African-American and [B]lack studies and Puerto Rican and Latino studies as part of the curriculum for the school district" (p. 3). With the passing of this legislation, Connecticut became the first U.S. state to require its public high schools to offer its students an elective course in Black and Latino Studies (Asmelash & Sturla, 2020). It may seem unexpected that this small New England state would pass such legislation before other states in the South and West, where there have been more public conversations and literature around Ethnic Studies in K-12 classrooms is more common; however, a closer look at Connecticut's population provides further context.

Why a Black and Latino Studies Course in Connecticut?

Connecticut residents of color pushed for this legislation and ensured its passing because *we* wanted to see ourselves and our histories in our classrooms (Exley, 2021). Demographic data helps to frame how legislation and its support in the state. During the 2018-2019 academic year, there

were 530,612 students enrolled in Connecticut public schools and nearly half of Connecticut public school students identified as students of color. According to EdSight's 2022 Enrollment Data, among the 47.6% students of color enrolled that year, 5.16% were Asian, 12.77% were Black or African American, 25.77% were Hispanic or Latino, and 3.56% were two or more races ("Connecticut's official source for education data," 2022). This data shows a need for a curriculum that is representative of the student population in the state. Students across the state advocated for the course with organizations like Students for Educational Justice, Citywide Youth Coalition, Hearing Youth Voices, and Connecticut Students for a DREAM. They held town halls, and many presented testimonies to the Connecticut Legislature (Lindsay, 2019).

Once the Connecticut Legislature officially ratified the Act, the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) tasked the State Education Resource Center (SERC) with creating the course's materials. SERC partnered with representatives from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and established an advisory group of over 150 stakeholders, including students, K-12 educators, administrators, and scholars from several disciplines, including history, education, and Ethnic Studies. Next, SERC broke the advisory group into several committees to oversee the curriculum's development, and the committees met several times through the spring of 2020. SERC also conducted focus groups and developed and distributed a curriculum survey to receive community feedback (Connecticut by the Numbers, 2020).

In December 2020, the CSBE approved SERC's curriculum, pending revisions, and SERC finalized the curriculum in the summer of 2021. An expert panel also reviewed the proposed curriculum before it was published. They designed the curriculum for a full-year elective in a two-semester system. The first half focuses primarily on Black and African American Studies and contains six units beginning with a unit titled "Where We Come From" and ending with "Protest, Politics, and Power," presented chronologically. The second semester is on Latino and Puerto Rican Studies and has five units. The first unit asks, "Who are We?" and the final unit asks, "Where are we now?" SERC made the curriculum publicly accessible online and created a documentary that covers the curriculum's development (State Education Resource Center [SERC], 2021).

Dozens of schools throughout the state ran a pilot of the course during the 2021-2022 school year. The 2022-2023 academic year marks the first year every Connecticut public high school has to provide the course. Since the course is an elective, it is not mandatory for students to take. Still, individual districts can decide if they want the Black and Latino Studies course or another Ethnic Studies course to serve as a graduation requirement. For example, in 2017, the school board of Bridgeport, Connecticut, passed a mandate for all their students to take a semester of coursework in "African American Studies, Caribbean/Latin American Studies or Perspectives on Race" to graduate from their public high schools (Lambeck, 2017). Bridgeport's student population at that time was about 19,000. The breakdown of Bridgeport's enrolled students was 2.75% Asian, 34.75% Black or African American, 48% Hispanic or Latino, and 12.69% White ("Connecticut's official source for education data," 2022). Bridgeport's mandate went into effect during the 2021-2022 academic year after the city provided training for teachers and completed the curriculum. Since students of color currently comprise almost half of the state's school population, we may see more districts enact similar requirements. Nearly two-thirds of Connecticut's residents of color are concentrated in 15 of the state's 169 cities and towns, especially the larger population centers (Eaton, 2020). In Bridgeport and other Connecticut cities, the proportions of Hispanic or Latino and Black or African American students are higher than the state's averages. It is likely that these

urban school districts will be among the first to adopt such policies. Moreover, based on studies in other states, Connecticut's Ethnic Studies curriculum will likely lead to positive results in student retention and testing scores (Bonilla et al., 2021; Sleeter, 2011; Wertheimer, 2022).

This article focuses on units dedicated to Latino Studies and Puerto Rican Studies to detail the process of developing and implementing Connecticut's new curriculum in public schools. The legislation likely named Puerto Rican Studies as a specific target area because Puerto Ricans make up 8.5% of the state's total population and account for more than half of the state's Latine[39] population. Connecticut has the largest percentage of Puerto Rican residents of any U.S. state, and 31.6% of Connecticut Puerto Ricans are under 18 and enrolled in K-12 schools (Puerto Rico Report, 2020). The histories of communities of color in the United States are often under taught or left out of K-12 classes. The implementation of Connecticut's Black and Latino Studies course points to the significance of these populations to national and state history. It also brings Puerto Ricans to the forefront of U.S. Latine history and the history of Connecticut in secondary education for future generations.

Puerto Ricans have a long history of migrating to Connecticut. Their status as American citizens allowed them to travel freely between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland for most of the twentieth century. In 1952 the government of Puerto Rico expanded its Farm Labor Program to Connecticut by contracting Puerto Ricans as agricultural workers to the state. To help tell the stories of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut, I use interdisciplinary methods to write lesson plans that make archival material accessible to the public. In addition to bringing archival material to classrooms, my lesson plans also serve as a living archive of my community. While this article focuses on a particular population and region, it speaks to broader themes in other Puerto Rican communities stateside, such as labor, migration, settlement, and community development.

Methods

This section details the methodological frameworks used to create lesson plans that are place-based, culturally relevant, and complementary to the state's new curriculum. I draw on my experiences writing curricula for Teach It, a program by Connecticut Humanities that is a part of their digital resources. The website houses free and publicly accessible materials for teaching and studying Connecticut's history. My experiences as a public historian, community-engaged researcher, and Connecticut Puerto Rican inform the discussion of my goals and methods for writing curricula. Connecticut Humanities commissioned four lessons—one elementary school and three high schools which were published in 2021 for www.TeachItCT.org.

Positionality

Scholars use methodologies to make sense of their work; one of my methods is my positionality. Hartford, Connecticut's capital city, is home to over 100,000 Puerto Ricans. Moreover, Puerto Ricans comprise over two-thirds of the city's Hispanic or Latino residents (Puerto Rico Report, 2020). Many communities around the country have been fundamentally shaped by Puerto Ricans,

[39] I use Latino when that when discussing the legislation, state curriculum, and educational data because that is the official language used. However, when discussing populations more broadly, I use Latine because it is gender-neutral and more accepted among Spanish speakers than Latinx.

especially in New England, where Puerto Ricans migrated to work in farms and factories during the post-World War II era. Today, cities like Hartford, Connecticut, and Holyoke, Massachusetts, have some of the highest concentrations of Puerto Ricans outside New York, known for its significant Puerto Rican population. As a historian and a first-generation Hartford Puerto Rican, I am interested in doing the work necessary to make the history of Puerto Ricans in my city and state more visible and accessible.

A scholar's interpretations reflect the methods used and the positionality of the scholar. In this case, my identity and experiences as a Puerto Rican woman inform my selection of sources and the insights I draw and share from my research with the public. I researched Puerto Ricans' history in Connecticut using a community-based approach, which included collecting oral histories, creating curricula, designing professional development courses for K-12 teachers, and giving public lectures. These interventions all help me bring history to the public in a way that inspires critical consciousness and ensures the success of Connecticut's Ethnic Studies Curriculum. I know the importance of engaging the public when producing historical narratives because I have seen how stories of Puerto Ricans rarely make it into traditional American history courses throughout my life and education. I see my public scholarship as working to provide Connecticut residents with history about the significant Puerto Rican population and their contributions to state history. A better understanding of the past helps to enable recognition of Puerto Rican impact in the state and provides ways to redress inequities faced in Connecticut.

Public History, Engaged Pedagogy, Public Scholarship, and Ethnic Studies

My roles as a social, oral, and public historian shape my scholarship. As a community member and historian, I see myself as an intermediary between archives and the public. I can use my historical training, research funding, and position as a Ph.D. Candidate at a Research 1 university to highlight and archive community history for future generations. For example, with specialized training, financial resources, and time, I can go into local archives, locate material on Puerto Ricans in Connecticut, and bring it back to the public, who contributed to the archive and history.

I use public history to develop curricula that center Puerto Ricans in Connecticut history for public use. The National Council on Public History defines public history as "the many and diverse ways in which history is put to work in the world" (National Council on Public History, n.d.). Public history, as it implies in the name, is for the public and must benefit the public. Public historians often collaborate with other stakeholders to find the best ways to communicate history to the public. The main stakeholders for my lesson plans were Connecticut Humanities, libraries and archival repositories, educators, and students.

Engaged pedagogy and public scholarship methodologies inform how I write lessons and bring local history to students and educators. Jones (2022) coins the term "street scholar" to refer to a public scholar who is "unapologetic about the fact that, while our scholarship is shared *with* the Academy, it is done *for* the community" (p.4). Jones reminds researchers and teachers that the public is who we serve. One way to fulfill this mission is by creating spaces to elevate our public's stories (Jones, 2022). For me, this means elevating the history of Puerto Ricans and the city of Hartford, Connecticut, in my curriculum to promote the teaching and learning of the subject in K-12 classrooms. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), bell hooks shows how teachers can use pedagogical strategies that affirm students' lived experiences. She discusses

engaged pedagogy and how it values everyone in the classroom by creating a space where all voices are heard and acknowledged. hooks' teachings inspired me to incorporate and center local sources to create lessons that allow students to see their stories reflected in their lessons with the ability to access primary sources from the lessons and the opportunity to explore them more locally.

By bringing attention to local resources, I sought to highlight the significant research materials created by Connecticut's communities of color for future generations that are often hidden in file folders and behind paywalls. I also use place-based education to guide my goals as a curriculum writer and educator. Place-based education grounds student learning in place (Gruenewald et al., 2007). These methods shape how I develop teaching documents that highlight existing archives while pointing to the need to create new, more inclusive archives.

Additionally, I use Ethnic Studies to inform the lessons I produce because, as a discipline, it shows that learning and education are personal and political. Ethnic Studies courses, curriculum, and pedagogy create spaces where students can engage with everyday issues such as race relations, racism, and discrimination. It asks practitioners to not only think critically and promote change but to disrupt colonialism and hegemony in educational spaces (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Moreover, classes on Ethnic Studies and lessons provide a space for addressing the gaps in traditional high school curricula that favors a race-neutral, color-blind, and/or Eurocentric approach. Ethnic Studies pedagogy responds to the needs of students and stakeholders by centering student experience and knowledge in the discussion (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). This concept allows me to recover and reconstruct the history of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut with the community while also intervening in more traditional ways of telling local history.

My extensive background in historical monographs on relevant subjects also aided me in content development. I viewed several archives to complete the lesson discussed below, including the Hartford Historical Center at the Hartford Public Library, the Windsor Historical Society, and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro) to develop a localized curriculum. Additionally, the Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks (CESSSF) provide standards for teaching social studies in the state. Teachers developed this framework in 2015 to guide educators and curriculum writers. The CESSSF assign content to grades that are age appropriate and fit into national standards. For example, in third grade, students explore local and Connecticut history. In high school, they study the role of Connecticut in American History and "Cultural Diversity and a Connecticut State Identity" (Connecticut State Department of Education [CSDE], 2015).

A submission template provided by Teach It served as a starting point for my curriculum development. A blank template is also available at https://teachitct.org/contribute-an-activity/. Guided by these methods, I established individual goals for the lessons. My goals were to:

1. Ground my lesson plans in local history.
2. Highlight local resources and institutions.
3. Point to the work that others have already done.
4. Support the state's new African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino curriculum.
5. Demonstrate Puerto Rican contributions to Hartford and Connecticut more broadly.
6. Create an interdisciplinary lesson plan that combines history, Ethnic Studies, and public humanities.

7. Provide teachers with strategies for working with communities in their local neighborhoods.

In addition to developing a set of goals for myself, another part of my method was to record my process step by step to provide a step-by-step for practitioners. Here is a breakdown of my process.

1. Representatives from Connecticut Humanities contacted me to write lesson plans about Latines in the state as part of several efforts to support the new Black and Latino course.
2. I chose four topics of focus and conducted research locally to learn more about each.
3. I identified and selected source material by asking what materials teachers and students need to understand a moment in history and what sources are interesting and grade appropriate.
4. The Program Consultant for Teach It and I procured permission to use the materials.
5. I completed the background research needed to write the lesson and developed the research questions, background statement, and activity outline.
6. I submitted a complete draft to the Teach It Program Consultant for comments, addressed the feedback, and resubmitted the updated lesson plan.
7. The lesson plan was approved by the Teach It Program Consultant and Director of Digital Humanities at Connecticut Humanities and uploaded for the author's final approval.
8. The lesson plan became publicly accessible online.

As noted in the step-by-step process, every Teach It lesson has some relevant historical information to ground the lesson. The lesson also provides teachers with a tool kit to get started that includes a key question, supporting questions, and a lesson outline based on primary sources.

Post-World War II Puerto Rican Farm Labor Migration to Connecticut: A Case Study

This activity first appeared in Teach It, a program of Connecticut Humanities, and is publicly available online. This lesson plan is suitable for high school students taking courses in American history, Puerto Rican Studies, or Ethnic Studies. Teachers can use it to teach themes such as agriculture, economics, labor, and migration. The lesson also addresses Connecticut-specific themes from CESSSF, such as "The Role of Connecticut in U.S. History" and "Cultural Diversity and a Connecticut State Identity" (CSDE, 2015). The key question asks: "How did Connecticut industries influence migration and immigration to the state and the development of new communities?" I designed the question to be broad so teachers can add it to their pre-existing lessons or meet their classroom's specific needs. Teachers can also add material about other migrant and immigrant populations in the state and be flexible with the period of time they want to cover before delving into the specifics of the lesson. The supporting questions, however, are directly related to the activity and ask students to engage critically with the sources.

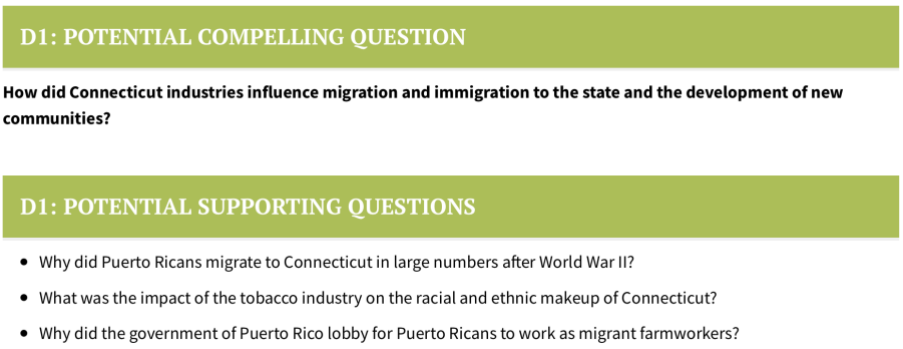

Figure 1. Image of Compelling and Supporting Questions

Sources

The lesson includes three primary sources students must consult: two from local repositories and one from a national archive. I located all the sources for this activity during the course of my research. The first source is an article from *The Hartford Courant* titled "Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen with Extreme Care," published on May 18, 1952. The article explains how 300 to 400 Puerto Ricans were arriving as contract migrant laborers to work in the tobacco fields of Connecticut. It highlights that the Puerto Rican workers were temporary laborers vetted by the Shade Tobacco Agriculture Growers Association. At the same time, it emphasizes that Puerto Ricans are American citizens, which reinforces for students and teachers that Puerto Ricans are migrants to the U.S. and not immigrants. Furthermore, the director of the STGAA, Ralph Lansbury, discusses the Association's hiring practices and provides information about the kinds of workers hired from Puerto Rico (The Hartford Courant, 1952). Researchers can miss this article tucked away on the twenty-third page of the paper. Still, it provides readers with a lot of information on the state's newest migrant workers and provides students with the information to answer the 5Ws (who, what, where, when, and why). The article provides students with a myriad of information to review and allows them to pick a particular portion or theme that interests them.

The second primary source is a pamphlet titled "How to Hire Agricultural Workers from Puerto Rico" (Lasbury, n.d.). It is available at the Windsor Historical Society in Windsor, Connecticut, in the "Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr. Collection," which contains the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association files from 1943 to 1966. The pamphlet was published in 1951 by the Migration Division of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor, which collaborated with the Farm Placement Service, the United States Employment Service, the Bureau of Employment Security, and the U.S. Department of Labor. Like the newspaper article, it emphasizes that Puerto Rican workers are part of the American *domestic* labor force because of their citizenship status. There is even a section in the pamphlet titled "Introducing your fellow American citizen from Puerto Rico" (Lasbury, n.d.). The two sources complement each other, allowing students and teachers to discuss various topics like labor, citizenship, and migration. The pamphlet also contains a sample of a worker's contract stating that Puerto Ricans laboring in Connecticut are doing so under the authority of the Puerto Rican government. This pamphlet provides students with a primary document to explore the kinds of messages sent to farmers and the broader public about the Farm Labor Program.

The third primary source in the lesson plan is a photograph titled "Interior of plane travel for migrants" (Center for Puerto Rico Studies Library & Archives, n.d.). The black and white image is

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from the Offices of the Government of Puerto Rico in the United States and their records at Centro, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies in New York City. At least thirty Puerto Rican men are sitting on a plane traveling from Puerto Rico to work in the U.S. mainland. Although this picture is not from a group of men headed to Connecticut, it provides one visual of the kind of experience that Puerto Rican men went through as they traveled on airplanes to work in the U.S. mainland during the mid-twentieth century. Students can look at this photograph and may notice a hat or shirt their grandparents used to wear, or they may compare the inside of this plane to the last plane they were on. Either way, the existence of this image also reveals the importance of this photo to the government of Puerto Rico in the United States at the time, giving students a number of themes to discuss, like why it is in the archives.

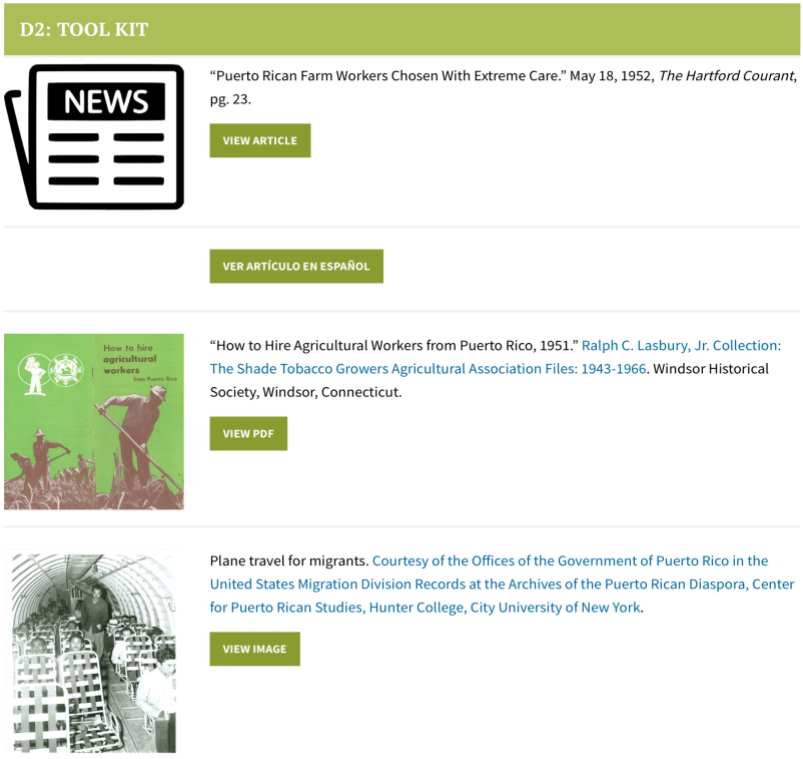

Figure 2. Image of Primary Sources Toolkit

Inquiry Activity Outline

The lesson's activity begins with a discussion on the differences between migration and immigration by having the students, and teacher define and provide examples for each term. Students will explore reasons why people migrated/immigrated in the past and relate them to current trends. Teachers then introduce students to the supporting questions to frame the source-based inquiry: "Why did Puerto Ricans migrate to Connecticut in large numbers after World War II? What was the impact of the tobacco industry on the racial and ethnic makeup of Connecticut? Why did the government of Puerto Rico lobby for Puerto Ricans to work as migrant farmworkers?"

Next, the students will read the newspaper article and take notes to understand better what type of source they are looking at and answer questions about the source's purpose, tone, and what

information it provides about Connecticut's tobacco industry and Puerto Rican migration. In pairs, students will analyze the image of Puerto Rican workers on an airplane and develop questions to share with their peers. After, students will closely read the promotional pamphlet given to Connecticut tobacco growers and answer questions in small groups. Finally, the class will come together to compare and contrast the sources. To conclude the activity, "Students will discuss why Puerto Ricans are migrants (and not immigrants) when they leave Puerto Rico to live and work in the mainland United States and what the importance of that differentiation is" (Rosario, 2021b, para. 4).

The lesson plan also includes some assessment steps teachers can take to gauge student learning. Labeled as "Communicating Conclusions," students can move beyond the material and content presented in class. For example, in this lesson, students are asked to draft a letter that responds to the article they read in class or conduct research on Connecticut's current tobacco industry and create an exhibit for The Luddy/Taylor Connecticut Valley Tobacco Museum.

At the end of the lesson plan is an additional resources section. The section separates material into categories such as "Places to Go," "Things to Do," "Websites to Visit," and "Articles to Read" (Rosario, 2021b). These resources are primarily aimed at educators because they provide more content and information for the topics from the lesson. However, students can also use them. The resources section allows the teacher to highlight local museums, historical societies, publications, scholars working on the topic, and relevant projects. Though often overlooked, I chose these historical sources purposely because they are available to students in their towns and cities or are digitally accessible because of the lessons. Learning this can be powerful for students from those communities and serve as a point of departure for further exploration.

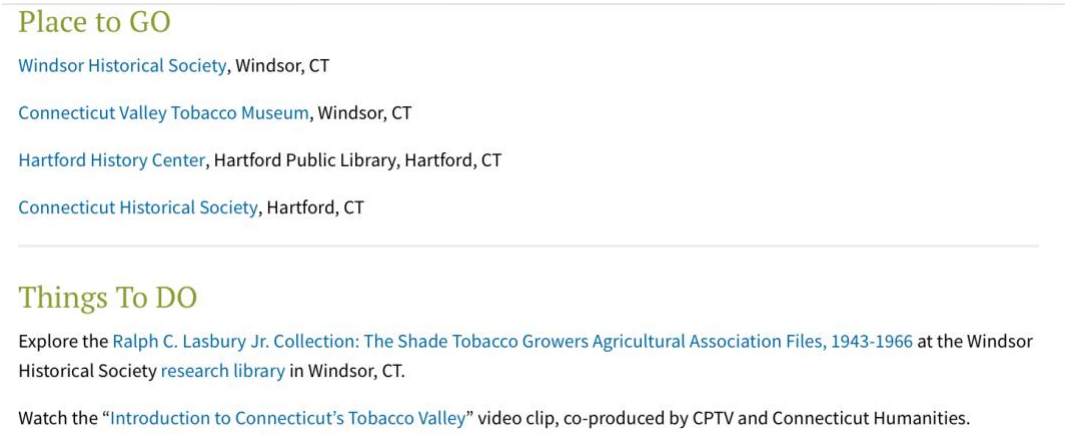

Figure 4. Image of Local Resources on Additional Resources Page

Conclusion

This article highlights the historic passing of Connecticut Public Act 19-12, *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Black and Latino Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*, and reflects effective ways to write Ethnic Studies curricula for K-12 students. Writing accessible lesson plans is one way to bring archives to the public, in this case to elementary to high school students, generating interest in local populations and history. Using a curriculum to archive local history helps to correct historical

misconceptions and inspires students to learn more about and effect change in their local communities. In their chapter "What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies" in *Transformative Ethnic Studies in School* (2020), Sleeter & Zavala show the need for Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools because of its positive effects on academic achievement for students of color (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). As an educator writing curriculum for a diverse group, creating spaces for students to share their knowledge and speak from their experiences is crucial. Teachers can empower students by using local materials, places, and stories in their curricula that reflect students' lived experiences and promotes academic achievement.

At the same time, there are complexities of being included in a state curriculum. In *Transformative Ethnic Studies in School* (2020), Sleeter & Zavala also speak to the disadvantages of standardizing an Ethnic Studies curriculum, as curricula should be grounded in the communities it serves. Moreover, they discuss the critical need for educators to be adequately trained. The new curriculum in Black and Latino Studies in Connecticut draws from diverse methods and approaches to ensure that Connecticut students see themselves represented in their classrooms.

Since the course's implementation, in addition to SERC, several institutions across the state have started offering professional and content development and creating complimentary materials. I see my lesson plans and public history work as interventions in the state's standardization because they are all based on material from local archives and speak to specific moments in state history. Furthermore, my lesson plans show Puerto Rican students from Central Connecticut the value of knowing their histories and provide them with tools to learn more about the contributions of their communities to state history. For me, it was necessary to specifically name some of the Puerto Rican contributions to Connecticut because of the large number of Connecticut Puerto Ricans, like me, often overlooked in narratives, archives, and curricula. I want Puerto Rican students in Connecticut to know *we* are a part of the state and should be included in its history and curriculum. Implementing Ethnic Studies in Connecticut public schools ensures that Connecticut students of color will see themselves reflected in their curriculum from now on.

With positive feedback from teachers, students, and community members, I continue to work on ways to showcase Puerto Rican history for Connecticut students and the public more broadly. After publishing my lesson plans in 2021, I worked with Connecticut Humanities to ensure they were accessible to all community members, including Spanish speakers. With the assistance of professional translators, all the lesson plans and their written material are translated into Spanish for use in classes for English Language Learners in the state. The Spanish translations went live in January 2023.

My professional work is rooted in my community, and my scholarship lives within my embodiment as a Puerto Rican woman from the diaspora, and I continue to find ways to include and highlight Puerto Rican stories in K-12 curriculum. Writing curricula and public histories of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut allow me to leverage the historical expertise I have accessed to help ensure that the next generation has access to a more inclusive and representative version of *our* history.

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Appendix A

Complete Lesson Plan

"Post-World War II Puerto Rican Farm Labor Migration to Connecticut."
Grade level: High School United States History
Themes: Cultural Diversity and an American National Identity; The Role of Connecticut in U.S. History
Topics: Agriculture; Economics; Labor; Latina/o/x Studies; Migration; Puerto Ricans
Towns: Windsor; Statewide

Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen With Extreme Care
The Hartford Courant (1923-1955); May 18, 1952; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Hartford Courant
pg. 23

Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen With Extreme Care

This summer some 300 to 400 Puerto Ricans will be imported for work in Connecticut tobacco fields.

It will be the first time that Puerto Ricans in large numbers have been brought in for seasonal work.

The difference between this project and the importation of British West Indians, which has been going on for several years, is that the latter are subject to immigration laws and can be deported for violating their contracts.

The Puerto Ricans, however, are U. S. citizens. They are not compelled to return to Puerto Rico when they finish their jobs, nor are they subject to deportation if they break the contracts.

Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr., director of the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, said Puerto Ricans are being brought in at the insistence of the U. S. Government who, he said, felt that employment opportunities should be given to off-shore U.S. citizens before foreigners.

Lasbury said the STGAA, in 1947, chose the British West Indian program after conferring with the State Labor Department. The BWI project was picked, he said, because it offered the local growers a "controlled" work force.

By "controlled," Lasbury said, he meant the workers could be supervised and bound by immigration regulation so that any person causing trouble to the community or creating a problem, could be immediately sent out of the country and barred from re-entry.

It also insured Connecticut, he said, that hundreds of seasonal workers would not remain in the state after the season ended and become a burden on the community.

Experienced Workers

The Puerto Rican, however, he said, can remain here if he desires and cannot be forced to leave once his work ends.

With this in mind, Lasbury stated, the STGAA has been selecting its Puerto Rican workers with extreme care. Only men with agricultural experience and families are being brought to this state.

Lasbury said the workers with families in Puerto Rico will be more likely to return after the season ends than single men with no responsibilities. Each worker is also required to sign a contract agreeing to return to Puerto Rico when his employment ends.

The workers themselves are expected to be excellent. The workers will come here, he said, with the object of making as much money working on the farms as they can in the short time they will be here. He said they like a long work week and are quick to learn once they are shown what is expected of them.

Few will be able to speak English. The language of Puerto Rico is Spanish. The employers have been told to demonstrate the duties of the workers with gestures and use sign language to get the meaning across.

The Puerto Ricans come from a land where the climate is always warm, Lasbury said, and it may take a short while for them to adjust to the Connecticut weather, strange food, a foreign language and large cities.

In addition to the Puerto Ricans, some 2,000 British West Indians will again work here this year. If the Puerto Rican workers succeed this summer, a larger number will probably be brought in next year.

Historical Background: Puerto Rican farm labor migration was the product of both the Puerto Rican and American governments. While there were Puerto Ricans in the state before World War II, May 1952 marked the beginning of a significant increase in Puerto Rican migration. The first group of Puerto Rican farmworkers came to work in Connecticut's tobacco fields as contracted laborers through Connecticut's Shade Tobacco Growers' Agricultural Association. In Connecticut, Puerto Ricans would join a workforce of over 20,000 that labored in the tobacco industry. The number of Puerto Rican migrants to the United States would increase

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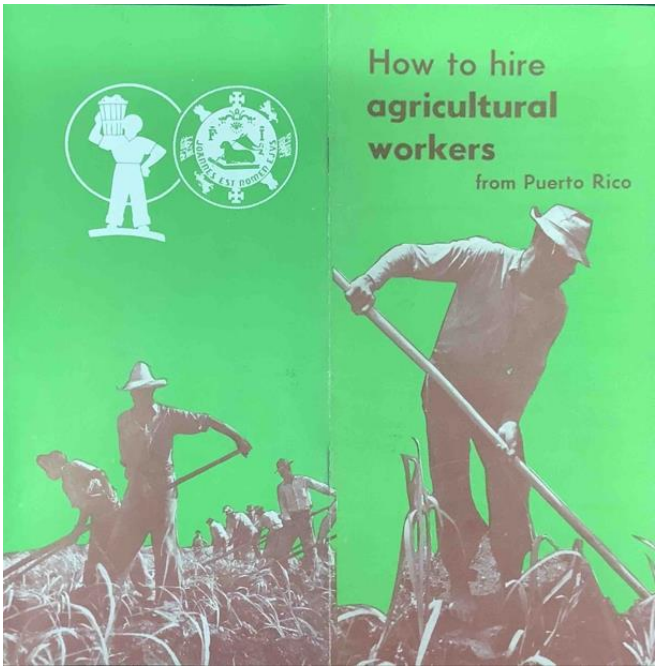
over the next several decades and lead to several Puerto Rican communities across the United States, including in towns and cities in Connecticut.



Compelling Question:
How did Connecticut industries influence migration and immigration to the state and the development of new communities?

Supporting Questions:
1: Why did Puerto Ricans migrate to Connecticut in large numbers after World War II?
2: What was the impact of the tobacco industry on the racial and ethnic makeup of Connecticut? 3: Why did the government of Puerto Rico lobby for Puerto Ricans to work as migrant farmworkers?

Resource 1: "Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen with Extreme Care." May 18, 1952, *The Hartford Courant*. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, pg. 23.

Retrieved from: https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/puerto-rican-farm-workers-chosen-with-extreme/docview/561810208/se-2?accountid=40258. Full pdf available here: https://teachitct.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/08/Puerto_Rican_Farm_Workers_Chosen.pdf.

Resource 2: "How to Hire Agricultural Workers from Puerto Rico, 1951." *Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr. Collection: The Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association Files: 1943-1966.* Windsor Historical Society, Windsor, Connecticut.

Link to full pamphlet here: https://teachitct.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/08/How_to_Hire_Agricultural_Workers_1951-compressed.pdf.
Resource 3: Offices of the Government of Puerto Rico in the United States (OGPRUS) Records, 1930-1993. Interior of plane travel for migrants: OGPRUS_MD_boxunknown_fCg_0005. Center for Puerto Rican Studies Library & Archives, Hunter College, CUNY.

Retrieved from: https://centroca.hunter.cuny.edu/Detail/objects/11182

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The Inquiry Activity:

1: Begin the class with the following open-ended discussion questions:

a. How do you define migration?
b. How do you define immigration?
c. What are some of the reasons people migrate today?
d. What are possible reasons people migrated in the past?

2: As a class, come up with definitions for migration and immigration and give 2-3 examples for each term to guide the lesson.

3: Read the newspaper article alone (source #1) and take detailed notes.

a. Identify source type.
b. What is the purpose of this piece?
c. What is the tone?
d. What information can you glean from this source?

4: Look at the image (source #3) and answer the following questions in pairs:

a. What do you think is going on in the image?
b. What questions do you have about the image?

5: Break the class into three groups. Each group will read three sections in the pamphlet answer the following questions:

Group 1: pages 3-5
Group 2: pages 6-8
Group 3: pages 9-13

a. Who is the audience?
b. What are some of the main points presented in your sections?
c. What information can you glean from this source about Puerto Rican farm labor migration?
d. What are your other observations and thoughts?

6: In a large group, compare and contrast the sources:

a. Do these sources challenge each other?
b. Are they in conversation with each other?
c. What do these images and newspaper articles reveal about the past? How do these sources affect your perception of the present?

Communicating Conclusions:

1: Students will write a letter to the editor in response to the newspaper article "Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen with Extreme Care." What questions do you have for the author? What new information can you provide?

2: Students will create recruitment material from the perspective of tobacco growers or associations to attract potential migrant laborers.

3: Students will investigate Connecticut's tobacco industry today and create an exhibit for the Luddy/Taylor Connecticut Valley Tobacco Museum.

Additional Resources:

Places to go:

- Windsor Historical Society (Museum), 96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095
- Connecticut Valley Tobacco Museum, 135 Lang Road, Windsor, CT 06095
- Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library, 500 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06203 Connecticut Historical Society Museum and Library, 1 Elizabeth St, Hartford, CT, 06105

Things to do:

- Explore the Ralph C. Lasbury Jr. Collection: The Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association Files, 1943-1966 at the Windsor Historical Society research library in Windsor, CT.
- Watch the "Introduction to Connecticut's Tobacco Valley" video clip, co-produced by CPTV and Connecticut Humanities.

Websites to visit:
"Puerto Rican Migrant Farmworkers: Enduring Experiences in Continental U.S. Agriculture" online exhibit by Dr. Ismael García Colón.

Articles to read:
Duany, Jorge. "A Transnational Colonial Migration: Puerto Rico's Farm Labor Program." 304 *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 84, no. 3–4 (January 1, 2010): 225–51.

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Maldonado, Edwin. "Contract Labor and the Origins of Puerto Rican Communities in the United States." *The International Migration Review* 13, no. 1 (1979): 103-21.