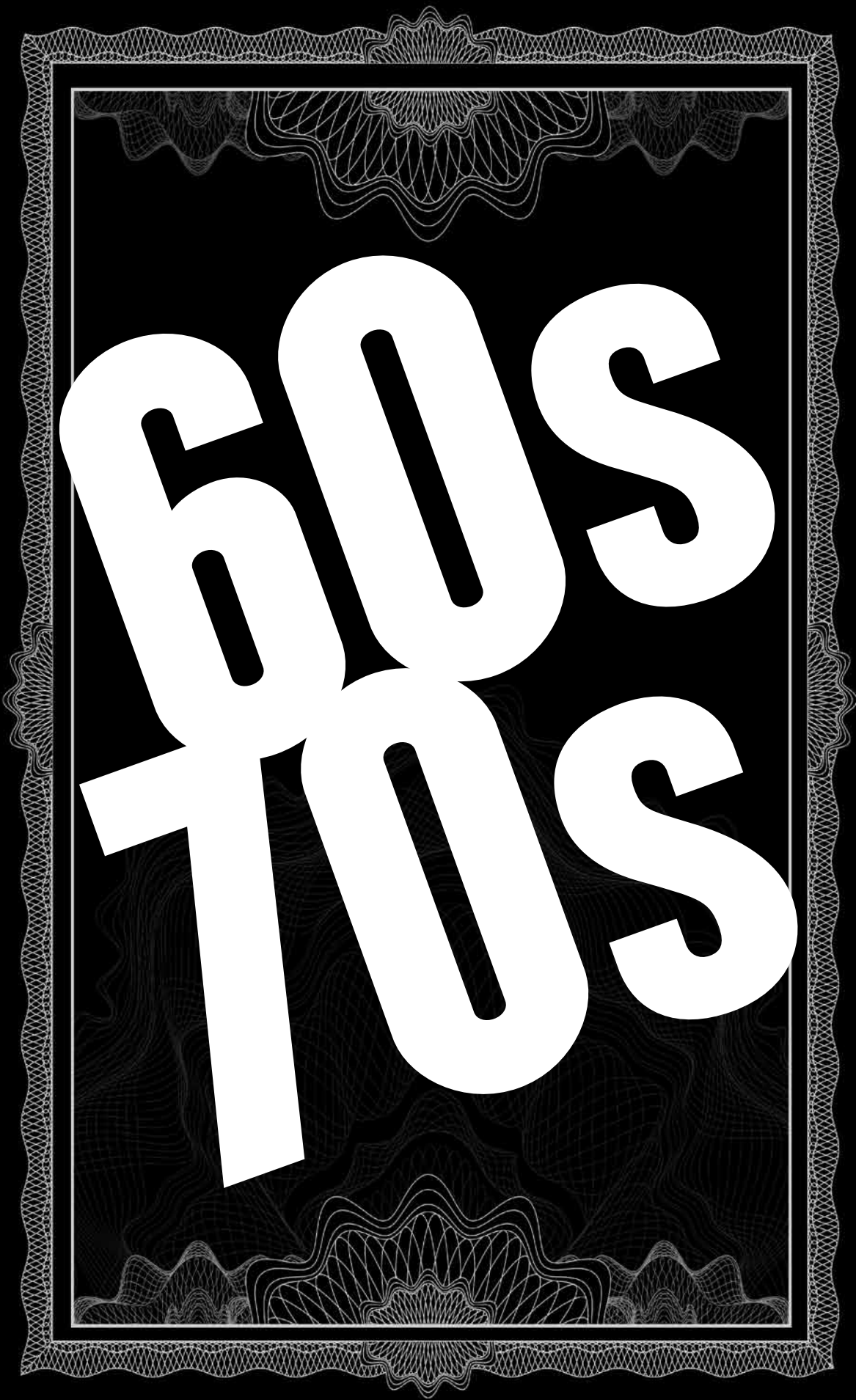




FROM COMMUNITY CONTROL TO CONSENT DECREE: PUERTO RICANS ORGANIZING FOR EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN 1960S AND '70S NEW YORK CITY

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ABSTRACT

Using literature review, archival analysis, and interviews this article describes major events, organizations, and individuals who advanced the educational rights of Puerto Ricans in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s. The post-WWII migration of Puerto Ricans introduced a new political battleground to the city's schools—that of language rights, which were linked to the continuing struggle over the governance of public schooling in a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual city and nation. The organizing and political activity of Puerto Ricans during this period resulted in unprecedented policies, structures, and institutions designed to fully incorporate them into the economic and political life of the city. [Keywords: community control, language rights, bilingual education, history of New York City schools, community organizing, decentralization]

EDUCATIONAL POLICY, SCHOOL STRUCTURES, AND CURRICULUM

are ultimately the result of prolonged battles between parties with competing solutions to educational problems. No place has this been more evident than in New York City, where the history of the public schools has been characterized as “The Great School Wars.”¹ The considerable post-WWII migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland and, in particular New York City, would introduce a new political battleground to the city’s schools—that of language rights—and link it to the continuing struggle over the purpose and governance of public schooling in a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual city and nation. The organizing and political activity of Puerto Rican New Yorkers during this period resulted in unprecedented policies, structures, and institutions designed to fully incorporate Puerto Ricans and other Latinos into the economic and political life of the city. Unfortunately, the legacy of these struggles is most clearly visible today in the efforts to discredit and dismantle them through the restructuring of the New York City schools.² A historical review of this period yields a richer understanding of the interests behind these policies and illuminates the contrast between federal and local policies that in the 1960s explicitly encouraged “maximum feasible participation” of community members in governance of schools versus the current technocratic orientation toward ensuring minimum possible power to communities.³

Through literature and document review, archival analysis, and interviews with key actors, this article attempts to provide an overview of major events, organizations, and individuals that played roles in advancing the educational rights of Puerto Ricans in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴

Puerto Rican Education in Post-Brown and Pre-Lau New York City

As the Puerto Rican population in New York City reached its peak during the mid-1960s,⁵ the school system’s failure to address the needs of migrant and second-generation Puerto Ricans converged with the struggles of African Americans to obtain desegregated and high quality schools in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision in 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which outlawed “separate but equal” schooling in the U.S. As Madeleine López notes: “Puerto Ricans brought new meaning to the struggle for desegregation and the historical implications for the landmark ruling” (López 2004: 300). While this meaning was tied to hopes for desegregated, high quality schools for all students, as a Spanish-speaking community

many Puerto Ricans further believed the city's schools were obligated to provide their children with a new form of instruction, one that addressed their particular linguistic and cultural needs.

Responding to appallingly high dropout rates and harsh experiences of exclusion within the schools, and encouraged by the civil rights victories of African Americans, a cadre of Puerto Rican leaders created grass roots, enrichment, and legal advocacy organizations that would eventually help shape a more inclusive and responsive structure for the city's schools.⁶ These organizations included ASPIRA, United Bronx Parents (UBP), and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF). Each organization, while using different strategies, sought to address the failure of the city's Board of Education to respond to *Brown* as well as provide appropriate instructional services for English-language learners. Under the aegis of *community control* and *bilingual education*, the leaders of these organizations played important roles in the struggle for education and language rights for Puerto Ricans and other communities marginalized by the schools. As a result of their efforts in collaboration with others, particularly African American efforts to desegregate schools, the 1969 School Decentralization Law and 1974 ASPIRA bilingual education consent decree were watershed policies targeted at generating opportunities for local representation in school governance and addressing the specific linguistic and cultural needs of the city's non-English speaking student population, which at the time was primarily Puerto Rican.

UNDER THE AEGIS OF COMMUNITY CONTROL AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION, THE LEADERS OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS PLAYED IMPORTANT ROLES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE RIGHTS FOR PUERTO RICANS AND OTHER COMMUNITIES MARGINALIZED BY THE SCHOOLS.

While the Decentralization Law and the ASPIRA consent decree reflected political compromises between interest groups competing for control of the school system, they powerfully impacted the organization of the city's education bureaucracy for years to come. Limited from the start, these policies have

been repeatedly criticized for their shortcomings and in recent years have been challenged by an ambitious set of reforms characterized by recentralization and mayoral control of schools. Although this history is obscure to current observers, the current reform environment invites an examination of the conditions that gave birth to these ostensibly flawed structures in the first place. Even as these policies are being dismantled the conditions under which Puerto Ricans in alliance with African Americans and progressive Whites articulated democratic solutions to educational problems during the 1960s are essential for contemporary educators and advocates to understand (Orfield and Eaton 1996; Del Valle 1998, 2003).

During the 1960s the communities of Harlem, the Lower East Side, and Ocean-Hill/Brownsville reflected the collective frustration of many African-American and Puerto Rican residents with the inability of the Board of Education to provide their children with excellent, desegregated schools. The creation of three experimental school districts in these neighborhoods provided the opportunity for one of these districts, Two Bridges on the Lower East Side, to implement a community-driven bilingual curriculum. The Two Bridges experiment, described later in this article, exemplifies how struggles for desegregation and language rights would overlap during this period as federal policy and court rulings compelled school systems to attempt what no other segment of the society was prepared to do—desegregate.⁷

The *Brown* decision concluded that state-imposed segregated schools were “inherently unequal” and therefore must be eliminated. This decision in effect outlawed educational apartheid in the U.S., striking down the “separate but equal” doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1892. The *Brown II* decision, however, ordered that desegregation occur with “all deliberate speed,” and as a result, ambiguity regarding implementation effectively allowed districts to maintain segregated schools.⁸ It was not until the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination in schools and institutions receiving federal funds, that the federal government began to enforce desegregation with any real impact (Orfield 1996a: 9). In addition, the Equal Protection Clause of the Civil Rights Act made it unlawful for any institution receiving federal funds to discriminate based on “race, color, or national origin” (Del Valle 2003: 235). This statute would later have special application for language minority children as it “was read by the Supreme Court in *Lau v. Nichols*, as also prohibiting language discrimination” (Del Valle 2003: 235). For non-English-speaking (im)migrant communities in the U.S., the *Lau* decision was an attempt to extend the equal opportunity goals of *Brown* for English-language learners. In New York City the ASPIRA Consent decree would seek to include English-language learners as ostensible beneficiaries of the promise of *Brown*, a promise that had evaded Puerto Rican students since they began arriving in the metropolis in large numbers.

The Puerto Rican Problem: The Board of Education

The educational challenges that Puerto Rican students have experienced in U.S. and New York City schools over the last seven decades have been well documented (Nieto 2000; Pedraza 1997; Rodríguez-Morazzani 1997; Santiago Santiago 1978). Some of the early literature refers to the “Puerto Rican problem,” implying that the educational difficulties of Puerto Rican students were a result of their presumably inferior culture, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Nieto 1995). Pedraza (1997) cites a 1935 New York State Report entitled “Reactions of the Puerto Rican

Children in New York City to Psychological Tests,” which describes Puerto Rican children in the following way:

Puerto Ricans are adding greatly to the already tremendous problem of the intellectually subnormal school retardates of alien parentage, whence are recruited most delinquents and criminals. Indeed the majority of the Puerto Rican children examined betray a family mentality which should not be permitted admission here, further to deteriorate standards already so seriously impaired by mass immigration of the lowest levels of populations of many nations. Most Puerto Rican children here cannot be assimilated in the existing type of civilization and they are helping to turn the tide back to a lower stage of progress.

Such commentary reflected eugenicist and colonial perspectives toward Puerto Ricans and unfortunately these themes have persisted in descriptions of the educational challenges of Puerto Rican communities throughout the 20th century.⁹ Underlying these characterizations is hostility toward the Puerto Rican migrant for “refusing” to assimilate to mainstream U.S. society, despite mainstream society’s constant refusal (reflected most poignantly in educational policy) to accept and incorporate them.

The first major analysis of Puerto Rican experiences in the New York City schools, the Puerto Rican Study, commissioned by the Board of Education and conducted between 1953–57, recommended that schools be staffed with Substitute Auxiliary Teachers (SATs), coordinators, and others “to meet the specific needs of the Puerto Rican child” (Santiago Santiago 1978: 16). The Board of Education, however, proved unresponsive to the recommendations of its own study.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s a group of Puerto Rican leaders emerged who had grown increasingly frustrated with the Board of Education’s lack of response to the recommendations of the Puerto Rican Study. Additionally, there was a dearth of Puerto Rican representation in the reform, research and, policymaking processes affecting the community in such significant ways (Pedraza 1997; Nieto 2000). Two organizations that emerged in large part because their founders were tired of Puerto Rican parents being blamed for their children’s educational problems were ASPIRA and United Bronx Parents (UBP). The founders of these organizations identified the problem not as inherent within Puerto Rican students but rather in the school system itself. As a result, these organizations developed innovative strategies to address the needs of Puerto Rican students. These programs were organized by how their founders defined the problems confronting Puerto Rican youth. They reframed the problem not as the youth themselves—but as the Board of Education.

In 1970 Evelina López Antonetty, the founder of United Bronx Parents, in testimony before a U.S. Congress Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity for Puerto Rican Children, argued: “The problem is not our Puerto Rican children. The problem is a system of education that squeezes and manipulates and destroys our children. The Federal Government must stop subsidizing this bungling, biased bureaucracy. You must give our communities a chance to educate our children” (U.S. Senate 1970: 3754). López Antonetty’s plea was echoed by Antonia Pantoja, a social worker and the founder of ASPIRA and several other Puerto Rican organizations who testified about the challenges that Puerto Rican parents and students encountered engaging the school system: “When you deal with the school system at the administrative level and at the

teachers level, you find a recalcitrant system that will continue to tell you that they are doing things in the ways educators believe best and you are not an educator, and should not meddle into anything they are doing” (U.S. Senate 1970: 3691). Pantoja believed that this intransigence, combined with the assimilationist orientation of the schools, was psychologically damaging and viewed it as an assault on the identity and well-being of Puerto Rican children. During her testimony she stated:

This brings me to the fact that the schools have mounted an attack on the child who speaks Spanish and who is different; an attack to force him to give this up. What happens as a result is that the child is ashamed of himself and his parents, and ashamed of his speaking Spanish. This hurts these children’s motivation and ability to learn. Because, you know, if you don’t think well of yourself you are not going to be able to achieve in the learning of a new language, or in the learning of new skills. (U.S. Senate 1970: 3688)

López Antonetty and Pantoja’s statements were based on their experiences confronting the Board of Education and reveal their lack of confidence in the Anglo-dominant Board of Education to produce any meaningful programs or reforms that would motivate and nurture Puerto Rican children. Pantoja stated forcefully: “We have arrived at the conclusion that they have failed to and they will never be able to provide certain functions. I refer to such functions such as motivation, guidance and programs to develop a positive identity in the children. Those functions, we in the Puerto Rican community can do best for our own children” (U.S. Senate 1970: 3689). Pantoja’s and López Antonetty’s testimony is reflective of a strong belief that many Puerto Ricans and African Americans embraced during this period—that the Board of Education had failed to persuade white parents to voluntarily desegregate and increase access to quality schools for children of color, and so representatives of these communities should have the opportunity to make educational decisions in the interests of their children. These views, shared by many African Americans after a decade of failure to implement *Brown*, gave birth to the community control movement.

The Challenges of Desegregation in NYC

From the beginning, New York City’s school bureaucracy struggled to implement *Brown*. A 1964 report, authored by State Commissioner of Education James Allen Jr.’s Commission on Human Relations and Community Tensions, criticized the Board of Education for its failure to develop and implement a successful desegregation plan and suggested that the only way this might be accomplished would be to reorganize the school system (Ravitch 2000: 280). The Allen Report concluded that:

Nothing undertaken by the New York City Board of Education since 1954, and nothing proposed since 1963, has contributed or will contribute in any meaningful degree to desegregating the public schools of the city. Each past effort, each current plan, and each projected proposal is either not aimed at reducing segregation, or is developed in too limited a fashion to stimulate even slight progress toward desegregation. (Ravitch 2000: 281)

While the Board of Education was the institutional focal point for African American and Puerto Rican activists desperate for change, a complex number of forces converged to make desegregation virtually impossible in New York City. David Rogers argues that while the Boards’ role was significant in undermining *Brown*,

it employed a “strategy of caution, vacillation, and ineffective planning” that converged with other forces, such as the “unplanned alliance between some school officials, White parents, and real estate interests (supported by key politicians) around the “neighborhood school slogan” (Rogers 1970: 126). As Rogers observes ultimately, the fear and resistance of White parents who felt threatened by growing African-American and Puerto Rican communities embraced “the neighborhood school symbol as a socially acceptable expression of the need to preserve the essentially white, middle class, and ‘private’ character of the neighborhood schools” (1970: 127).

The Board of Education privileged the fears of white parents committed to neighborhood schools even as black and Puerto Rican parents and activists grew increasingly frustrated with the Board’s lack of commitment to desegregation. In consequence, minority parents began to eschew desegregation as a solution to the educational problems of their communities. The unwillingness of white parents to voluntarily desegregate, however, would eventually coalesce with the political power of the teachers’ and administrator unions—a situation leading to racially charged confrontation. Diana Caballero, for example, observes that parents and activists of color were frustrated with an “irrelevant and racist curriculum and teachers and a hostile bureaucracy with professional power exercised through strong teachers’ and administrators’ unions, particularly the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators (CSA)” (Caballero 1989: 87). Ironically, the UFT as it later engaged in three strikes would assert racism/anti-Semitism on the part of minority activists as a strategy to undermine the goals of the community control movement, which threatened the control the unions had over the schools and was now building momentum (see Gittell and Hevesi 1969).

I.S. 201 and the Birth of Community Control

Central to the Allen Report’s recommendations was the elimination of the city’s segregated junior high schools and the formation of new integrated intermediate schools whose “ethnic mixtures would be drawn from both predominantly white and predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican primary schools” (Ravitch 2000: 29). The proposed bussing of black and Puerto Rican students to predominately white schools was unacceptable to many parents in those communities even as white parents refused to send their children to black and Puerto Rican schools. Preston Wilcox, a black social worker and activist from East Harlem, described the opposition of black and Puerto Rican parents to one-way or “forced integration” plans that would send students of color to white schools but not Whites to schools in black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods. He stated: “if one can believe that a predominately *de facto* ‘segregated’ white school can be a ‘good school,’ then, one must believe that a *de facto* ‘segregated’ Negro and Puerto Rican school can also be a ‘good school.’ If one can believe that one’s potential has no ethnic dimensions—then one must behave in this manner” (Ravitch 2000: 293). In response to *de facto* segregation many black and Puerto Rican parents and community leaders came to believe that the only way to ensure that their children would receive a sound education in neighborhood schools would be to govern the schools themselves. In reflecting upon this period, Luis Fuentes, the city’s first Puerto Rican superintendent, recalls:

The school system in New York wanted to remove black students and other minority students from their communities to achieve what they called “integrated” schools.

Basically youngsters were being taken out of their community schools and placed in predominately white schools. Parents, recognizing the sources for potential problems, felt that the schools closest to their residence could be worked upon and improved, instead of allowing their children to be shipped to other schools outside of their own communities. In effect, the main characteristic of this struggle had to do with a community response to forced integration. (Jennings and Chapman 1998: 283)

In 1962 the Board of Education announced it was going to create a new “showcase” intermediate school in Harlem—I.S. 201. Many Harlem residents were excited at this news, however, many were also concerned that the Board of Education chose a site that was too far north at the end of Spanish Harlem, which would not attract sufficient numbers of white students. Community groups protested the site, as they still saw desegregation (e.g. the bussing of Whites to black and Puerto Rican schools) as the way to improve educational opportunities for their children. Meanwhile, the number of segregated schools in New York City continued to increase as the black and Puerto Rican school population surpassed 50 percent in 1966 (Ravitch 2000: 292). I.S. 201 provides a valuable example of how the Board of Education’s aversion and inability to desegregate schools in a black and Puerto Rican neighborhood gave rise to the community control movement.

Despite assurances from the Superintendent of Schools Bernard Donovan that I.S. 201 would attract white students from Queens and the Bronx, in January 1966 the I.S. 201 Ad Hoc parent council, a group of community leaders affiliated with antipoverty organizations wrote the Superintendent when they learned that he reneged on the promise to provide the Harlem community with an integrated school by establishing a 50/50 black/Puerto Rican student population:

We have knowledge that your office with deliberate calculation intends to use Puerto Rican students on a 50—50 basis to give the impression that I.S. 201 is racially integrated. This tactic, sir, will attract the strongest, most militant protest from this organization and others allied with us in the struggle for real racial integration of New York City schools. This in itself will turn I.S. 201 into a battleground. (Ravitch 2000: 295)

In response to community pressure Superintendent Donovan initiated a last minute campaign to attract Whites to the Harlem school by mailing 10,000 invitations to white parents over the summer before the school was to open. No more than ten families however, expressed any interest (Carter 1971: 7). As a result, by the time I.S. 201 was scheduled to open black and Puerto Rican leaders were ready to boycott the new school. Their demand was either integrate the new school by bussing in white students or let the community run the school. This demand would ignite the community control movement in other parts of the city, particularly Ocean Hill/Brownsville in Brooklyn and on the Lower East Side, a movement that would place enormous pressure on policy makers to accelerate plans to decentralize the city’s schools.

Decentralization is Not Community Control

Later that summer, upon learning that plans for desegregating the new school had been scrapped, the members of the I.S. 201 Ad Hoc Parent Council informed the Board of Education that its choice for principal, Stanley Lissner, a highly regarded Harlem administrator, was unacceptable. Lissner, who was white,

had recruited a racially balanced teaching staff, including Hernan La Fontaine, a Puerto Rican (who later founded P.S. 25 in the Bronx, the first bilingual school in the Northeast) as an assistant principal. In describing the difference between the Board of Education's proposed decentralization plan and the ethos of community control, La Fontaine illustrates how Lisser went from being the unanimous choice for principal, when the community expected a desegregated school, to symbolizing the hegemony of the white-dominated Board of Education, which had failed to follow through on its promise to desegregate:

So you had a direct confrontation between decentralization and community control and so Intermediate School 201 was the very first place in the City of New York where the notion of community control was being experimented with. And so, in fact when the principal who had been selected was no longer in favor, the community was determined to show the world, including the Board of Education that it was their call as to who should be the principal of that school and it wasn't going to be this gentleman.¹⁰

Community control advocates sought to put school governance and the power to hire and fire principals and teachers into the hands of those community members most directly impacted by the services of schools. Alice Cardona, a parent organizer and activist who worked at the time with Evelina López Antonetty of United Bronx Parents (and later with ASPIRA), described the governance structures that activists within the community control movement were proposing:

Community control is that the community people, parents, and people in the community who live in that community were going to determine what kind of education was going to take place in that school. Who were the teachers that were going to be hired, the superintendent that was going to be hired and the kinds of school programs that were going to take place in the schools? That's what community control was supposed to be.¹¹

A September 15, 1968, document distributed by United Bronx Parents quotes David Spencer the Chairman of the I.S. 201 Governing Board: "The Board of Education will call it decentralization. We like to carry it further. We call it community control." The document describes the differences between the plan for decentralization proposed by the Board of Education, which provided limited powers to community representatives and acknowledged the desire of community leaders for control over budget, curriculum, and personnel matters.

Working closely with Spencer on the I.S. 201 Governing Board were two young Puerto Rican activists, Julio Morales Jr. and María Canino. Spencer recruited them to represent P.S. 39 in East Harlem, one of four I.S. 201 feeder schools with a very large population of Puerto Rican students. Morales described the sense of solidarity that existed on the board and the high level of consensus that existed between black, white, and Puerto Rican members of the governing board:

The relationships on the governing board were excellent and I think it had to do with the goals that we had and I remember feeling that this was the most harmonious school board in terms of Whites, Blacks and Puerto Ricans. I agreed 100% with the philosophy of community control. To me that meant selecting the principals,

UNITED BRONX PARENTS
791 Prospect Avenue
Bronx, New York
842-6666

September 15, 1968

COMMUNITY CONTROL IS NOT DECENTRALIZATION

"The Board of Education will call it decentralization. We like to carry it further. We call it community control."

David Spencer, Chairman
I.S. 201 Governing Board

DECENTRALIZATION:

Will mean that locally appointed or elected boards will have limited powers over the selection of personnel, allocation of budget, adaptation of curriculum, and deployment of staff.

BUT IT WILL ALSO MEAN THAT THE CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS will continue to have SUBSTANTIAL POWERS. They will be able to remove any governing board, even if it is chosen by the community. They will still decide on teacher and supervisory "qualifications" and examinations. They will negotiate the contracts with the UFT, with the Supervisory union, and with the custodians. They will have final powers over budget, deciding how much each district should get. They will still control school construction.

United Bronx Parents Statement on Community Control distinguishing between Decentralization and Community Control Source. The Records of United Bronx Parents Inc. Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY. Reprinted by permission.

selecting the teachers, being involved in the curriculum. Those were very key and crucial—innovation in terms of teaching, getting teachers who really cared about the kids and selecting the teachers from that perspective.

Later, Morales would direct the East Harlem Coalition for Community Control, which developed a curriculum to train Puerto Rican parents to engage the schools. According to Morales, the focus of the curriculum was to provide parents with the skills to communicate with their children's teachers:

We taught them how would you interview a teacher to make sure that your child was doing well and to get from the teacher what you needed to get from the teacher about how you can help your child? How do you talk to a principal to object to something that was done to your child or someone else's child? How do you organize an effective Parent Teacher Organization? How do you run a meeting?¹⁴

The East Harlem Coalition for Community Control was also interested in establishing a separate school district for East Harlem, separate from the predominately African American Central and West Harlem and the predominantly white Yorkville community to the south, which had their own school districts each of which incorporated part of East Harlem. Morales observed that having two Puerto Ricans recently appointed to the Board of Education (Joseph Monsserat and Ana Consigliaro) made a difference in establishing an East Harlem school district:



COALICION DEL BARRIO PARA CONTROL COMUNITARIO.— Un grupo de doce padres que tomó un intenso curso sobre educación pública para ayudar a sus hijos, se graduó en el 1760 avenida Lexington, Manhattan. Dirige la Coalicón, Julio Morales. Asistieron a los ejercicios de graduación: José Monserrat, Presidente de la Junta Interina; Isaiah Robinson, miembro de la

y Roland Cintrón Cintrón, Subcomisionado de la CDA. En la foto, estos señores y los graduados: Roberto Acevedo, Julia Lee Bruce, Darie Castro, Isabel Colón, Evelyn Corbit, Helen Horton, Marie Lane, Carmen López, Paula Rodríguez, Ramona Rodríguez, Justa Santana y Ruth Mae Snuford. (Foto EL DIARIO-LA PRENSA)

Clipping from El Diario (circa 1968) describing a meeting of the East Harlem Coalition for Community Control listing Julio Morales (top row, third from left) as director of the coalition. Courtesy of the authors.

We worked with these parents to put pressure on the Board of Education to make sure that there would be an East Harlem school district when they carved out the 30 plus districts. And I think we were very successful, I think we were a major voice in making that happen. One of the things we taught parents was how do you meet with members of the Board of Education, which was at that point, appointed by the mayor. How do you get them to listen to you and what's the message that you want to give to them. We were fortunate that Joseph Monserrat was the president of the board and another woman Ana Consigliaro (a Puerto Rican woman married to an Italian) was also very supportive of the East Harlem Coalition for Community Control.

The momentum generated at the grass roots by parents organized by people like Morales, Canino, and Evelina López Antonetty would converge with the efforts of an advisory commission appointed by Mayor John Lindsay and headed by the former special assistant to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson: McGeorge Bundy, director of the Ford Foundation. The inherent tensions between community advocates and establishment representatives would be partially mediated by the only Puerto Rican member of this body, a social worker named Antonia Pantoja.

The Bundy Commission

As a result of the tensions between community leaders and the Board of Education, Mayor John Lindsay appointed the Bundy commission to study the issue and recommend a decentralization plan for the city's schools. The Bundy Commission included a number of prominent individuals including Mitchell Sviridoff, head of the city's Human Resources Administration; Alfred Giardino, President of the Board of Education; Francis Keppel, former U.S. Commissioner of Education and president

of the General Learning Corporation; and a black woman Benetta Washington, head of the Women's Job Corps and a former high school principal. ASPIRA's founder Antonia Pantoja was the commission's only Puerto Rican member (Pantoja 2002: 132). The Bundy Commission's report, called "Reconnection for Learning," proposed the creation of between 30 and 60 community school districts and emphasized the importance of the Board of Education to engage in parent-community partnerships in educational decision-making to help reform the schools (Caballero 1989: 88). The report attempted to provide a blueprint for bringing constituencies together in order to renew the school system; however, competing interests played themselves out on the commission as well. In her memoirs, Pantoja describes the power struggles that occurred between the various stakeholders on the commission:

The work of the panel became very heavy with evening meetings full of anger and disagreement among all affected parties. The hostility of members of some groups was intense, and Benetta and I carried a larger responsibility because of our experience in working in communities. School administrators did not want to share power with teachers. Teachers did not want to share power with parents. No one wanted students to participate in the new local boards. The power dynamics were very clear. Those who had always controlled decision-making in the schools did not want to share power with others. (2002: 133)

The reluctance of the teachers' and administrators' unions, and the Board of Education to support decentralization became another rallying point for activists. In an effort to gain the attention of educational administrators who were not responding to these communities' need to have decision-making power in their schools, on December 21, 1966, black community activists from I.S. 201, joined by white leaders of the community group Equal and Puerto Rican leaders, took over the meeting room for the Board of Education and declared themselves "The People's Board of Education" (Ravitch 2000: 308; Gittell 1971: 147). This takeover of Board property lasted two days and resulted in the activists' arrest. One of the members of the People's Board of Education was Puerto Rican organizer Evelina López Antonetty from United Bronx Parents (UBP).

Responding to pressure from three communities in particular, in an unprecedented initiative, the Ford Foundation under Bundy's leadership announced in July of 1967 that it would support the establishment of three experimental school districts in Ocean Hill/Brownsville in Brooklyn; Harlem's I.S. 201 complex; and the Lower East Side's Two Bridges complex. Each of these districts would have the responsibility of setting up their own school boards, appointing district administrators and staff, and making educational decisions in their own communities (Gittell 1971: 144). They all shared the goal of "demonstrating that a decentralized school district responsible to the community would improve the quality of education being offered to the children in the public schools of NYC" (Gittell 1971: 143).

Marilyn Gittell observes that the plan for the creation of the districts was a "product of meetings between the union, the Superintendents of Schools, and community groups" (1971: 143). Although all these stakeholders supported the experimental school districts at the time, the teacher's union was not well represented on the Bundy Commission and like the Board was unprepared for parents and community residents to exercise any real decision-making power over personnel issues. Perhaps the most significant example of this was the



Evelina López Antonetty, participating in People's Takeover of the Board of Education for three days in December 1966. Photographer unknown. The Records of United Bronx Parents Inc. Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY. Reprinted by permission.

decision by the Ocean-Hill Brownsville District Administrator Rhody McCoy to transfer 17 teachers out of the experimental district. This action led to a series of three citywide strikes by the teacher's union during the fall of 1968 and a huge battle over the right of the leadership of the experimental school districts to hire and fire teachers. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) framed the battle around "due process" for the teachers, but the fight was really about power and control, as the teachers in question had actually been transferred and not fired. Powerful racial and anti-Semitic overtones permeated the debate over decentralization and accelerated the confrontation between black and Puerto Rican Community Control advocates and the predominantly Jewish teachers' and administrators' unions.¹⁵ Albert Shanker, the UFT President, vigorously opposed the idea of "militant" individuals running the schools and directed the Unions' resources to "undertake an intensive campaign to support those legislators who supported its position in Albany and to defeat those who did not" (Berube and Gittell 1969: 185). Ultimately conceding to the UFT's influence in Albany, the New York State legislature compromised with the 1969 Decentralization Law, which divided the city school system into 32 Community School districts and six high school superintendencies (Mediratta and Fruchter 2003). The new districts were governed by elected boards that would appoint superintendents, principals, and district and other supervisory personnel, as well as grant tenure and remove these staff from office. Additionally, boards determined after-school, evening, and summer programs, curricula, and instructional methods and proposed and allocated budgets (Caballero 1989: 85). The boards did not have the power to hire and fire teachers.

The Experimental School Districts were terminated as a result of the Decentralization Law. Many argued however, that the policy was not designed to alleviate the ills of the school system, but, as Diana Caballero observed, "to restore peace in a city that had been shaken by racial conflict" (Caballero 1989: 85). Consequently, the law contained elements of the solutions advanced by competing interest groups but would not ultimately be an

effective solution to the problems of educational segregation. It did, however, create a new opportunity for previously excluded communities to participate in educational decision-making. Caballero, for example, argued that as it was being implemented, decentralization was not “the total answer to the educational crisis the city is facing, but it is one of the few mechanisms available to empower children, parents and community on the local level.... The decentralized system remains the main connection that parents have to the educational policy process” (Caballero 1989). In this sense, the struggle for community control and the subsequent decentralization law as a strategy for school reform were about which racial/ethnic groups would maintain power over the schools and the jobs available in them. While the United Federation of Teachers, the Council of Administrators and Supervisors, and others who preferred to maintain racially segregated schools governed by a central Board were victorious, the opportunity for meaningful community input into school governance changed the racial/ethnic power dynamic for decades to come and would allow Puerto Ricans to challenge the school systems’ failure to adequately educate their children. This would become increasingly evident in efforts to establish bilingual education for Puerto Rican students and other English language learners.

Community Control and Early Experiments in Bilingual Education

While the experimental districts were short lived and ultimately undermined by the union’s political power, the movement built momentum leading to a number of policy victories. For example, the Lower East Side experimental district was led by coalition of Puerto Rican, black, and Asian community members, who supported a slate of school board candidates called *Por Los Niños* (For the Children) for the school board elections. Almost all of the largely Puerto Rican, community-led *Por Los Niños* slate had children in schools within District 1. Their success was significant because the school board elections were flawed due to a complex petitioning process that eliminated many minority candidates from the beginning of the process. Confusing voter-registration procedures and low voter turnout also posed significant problems (Jennings and Chapman 1998: 286; Caballero 1989: 86). The campaign for the *Por Los Niños* slate embraced Puerto Rican cultural traditions and was an example of the multiethnic movement of school reform during this era. Artists such as Tito Puente, José Torres, and Machito came to the community to play music the day of the elections as a strategy to mobilize people to exercise their right to vote (Jennings and Chapman 1998: 287).

Although the *Por los Niños* slate was eventually defeated as a result of limited resources and the resistance of elected officials, educational bureaucrats, and leaders from the teachers union, it was successful in increasing awareness of the educational needs of black, Latino, and Asian schoolchildren, and especially the needs of English language learners. The coalition also stressed the importance of educators viewing parents as partners in the schooling process (Jennings and Chapman 1998: 280). The work of *Por Los Niños* was successful in advancing the goals of parent participation, professional development for teachers, school accountability to community interests, and bilingual education. The message conveyed through the activism of the *Por los Niños* coalition included the concept that the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of children were an essential component of effective pedagogy in public schools. One of the central goals of the *Por los Niños* coalition was for bilingual education, as well as cultural education, to be implemented in the schools.

THE APPOINTMENT OF LUIS FUENTES AS THE FIRST PUERTO RICAN SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT IN NEW YORK CITY WAS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF COMMUNITY EFFORTS IN THE LOWER EAST SIDE TO OBTAIN REPRESENTATION IN THE SCHOOLS.

The appointment of Luis Fuentes as the first Puerto Rican School District Superintendent in New York City was another example of community efforts in the Lower East Side to obtain representation in the schools. Influenced by his experiences as a principal in the Ocean Hill/Brownsville experimental district, Fuentes saw his role as implementing “the wishes of the community school board” (Jennings and Chapman 1998: 284). Although Fuentes was originally opposed to bilingual education, he observed that his opposition was a result of not being fully informed about bilingual education. Later, he became a supporter after witnessing successful programs that allowed children to flourish (Jennings and Chapman 1998: 284). Fuentes was also persuaded by the compelling ways in which bilingual education engaged parents in making schools more responsive:

There is no question that the parents that participated in the struggle were motivated by a need to see their children feel comfortable about being who they are and speaking their language. This does not mean that they did not want their children to learn English. I've never met a Puerto Rican who didn't express the need for learning English. From the beginning parents wanted to make bilingual education a part of the school systems. (Jennings and Chapman 1998: 285)

Fuentes also supported bilingual education because he believed that an increase in Spanish-speaking teachers strengthened the home-school-community connections in the Lower East Side. Although there was some movement in implementing bilingual education programs in the Lower East Side and at P.S. 25 in the Bronx, elected officials, policymakers, and educators still defined the problem as a language “deficit” in the children and conceptualized the solution by recommending that instructors simply “teach them English.” A lawsuit filed by ASPIRA in 1972 would eventually lead to a broader, institutionalized solution.

The ASPIRA Consent Decree

ASPIRA was founded by Puerto Rican social worker, educator, and activist Antonia Pantoja in 1961. From its inception ASPIRA, which means “to aspire” in Spanish, was dedicated to advancing the Puerto Rican community through educating its youth (Santiago Santiago 1978: 5). Its focus on high school and college retention was facilitated by ASPIRA clubs, which organized young people and developed leadership at their various high schools and colleges. In November of 1969, a group of *Aspirantes* (student participants in ASPIRA clubs), including future Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, presented a list of 19 demands to the Board of Education. The Aspirantes would subsequently organize a sit-in supporting bilingual educational programming and the hiring of bilingual teachers (Reyes 2000: 76). By the early 1970s, Pantoja and others were beginning to consider legal strategies to institutionalize bilingual education. To achieve this goal, ASPIRA, with a group of Puerto Rican parents, filed suit against the Board of Education of New York City in 1972. The Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF) was formed in response to the demand for litigation objecting to the systematic mis-education of Puerto Rican children and represented ASPIRA (Del Valle 1998: 200). Leading the legal team for PRLDEF was its founder, César Perales, who observed that the importance of bilingual education was also stressed by Puerto Rican and Latino teachers, who believed bilingual instruction was an effective way to teach children.¹⁶ Perales described the early stages of the lawsuit:

The ASPIRA lawsuit really came out of a meeting in which Toni (Antonia Pantoja) was involved with some other people from ASPIRA and teachers. In 1970 the work we did then laid the groundwork for that. In other words, the legal research that was being done in preparation for that in the first draft of the complaint. But, it then took two years to actually bring it about because it was only two years later that the Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund started with a couple of friends. In fact, one of the examples we would give to potential funding sources was the need for educational programming for Puerto Rican kids, who made up such a large percentage of the student body in New York City. That was when we were able to devote significant legal resources to preparing this lawsuit. We were more than ready to take on the lawyers of the City of New York and the Board of Education by the time we brought the lawsuit.¹⁷

ASPIRA chose to pursue the goal of establishing bilingual education for several reasons, among them the need for the Puerto Rican community to demonstrate that it was capable of defining policy solutions for the needs of its children and that it intended to become fully incorporated into the life of the city. Luis Nieves, director of ASPIRA during the time of the lawsuit, described the organization’s decision to pursue bilingual education services not necessarily as a sound philosophy of teaching but “rather as a tool for political organization; as a means of preserving community identity, maintaining children in neighborhood schools, and reinforcing language and culture; and a route for Puerto Ricans to access jobs and the benefits of the education system” (Falk and Wang 1990: 6). While these political goals were clear, Isaura Santiago Santiago identified three structural and instructional goals that ASPIRA also sought to obtain through the lawsuit. These included the provision of special education programs for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, compensatory services for bilingual students as opposed to “sink or swim” teaching

practices, and a guarantee that Puerto Rican parents could choose maintenance bilingual education for their children (Santiago Santiago 1986). Eventually, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* would provide legitimacy to ASPIRA's efforts to obtain a remedy at the local level. The result of the case was a court-monitored consent decree, a binding legal agreement between ASPIRA and the Board of Education that established a transitional bilingual education program in New York City's schools.¹⁸ Santiago Santiago (1989) argues that the consent decree became a model nationwide and that the case was significant because it involved the largest school system in the country as well as the largest plaintiff group at the time (over 80,000 Puerto Rican students were potentially affected).

A POWERFUL CONSTITUTIONAL LEVER FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION ADVOCATES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY EMERGED FROM THE STRUGGLE OF SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINESE COMMUNITY, WHICH ON MAY 28, 1970, BROUGHT FORWARD A COMPLAINT IN *LAU V. NICHOLS*.

The Role of Federal Policy: Title VII and Lau

In response to the need for changes in educational policy to address the needs of the nation's English-language learners, Congress passed the 1968 Bilingual Education Act (also known as Title VII), which recognized "the special educational needs of the large numbers of children of limited English speaking ability in the United States" and provided "financial assistance to local educational agencies to develop and carry out new and imaginative elementary and secondary school programs designed to meet these special needs" (U.S. Congress 1968). Although the legislation recognized that change was necessary to adequately address the needs of language-minority children, it defined the problem as a deficiency in knowledge of the English-language rather than as the need to change the educational underachievement of all language-minority children (Del Valle 1998: 196). Title VII had a number of other problems, among them the reduction of possibilities of bilingualism through an emphasis on teaching English; relying on local school districts to devise instructional solutions; issuing no guidelines for the development of programs; and the creation of unnecessary poverty criteria, which Del Valle argues "stamped the 'compensatory label' firmly on bilingual education" condoning the segregation of language-minority children" (Del Valle 1998: 196).

Because there had never been a policy resolution for English-language learners, Title VII represented a victory for the nation's Latinos, despite the fact that the

act's funding between 1969 and 1973 never exceeded \$35 million (about \$10 per child in the target population and probably an average of about \$5 to \$6 per child) (Moran 1988—as cited in Del Valle 2000: 228). Over time, the funding increased but never enough to meet the increasing numbers of students who needed bilingual services.

A powerful constitutional lever for bilingual education advocates throughout the country emerged from the struggle of San Francisco's Chinese community, which on May 28, 1970, brought forward a complaint in *Lau v. Nichols*. In this case, Chinese-dominant families claimed that the San Francisco Unified School District violated their constitutional rights by failing to provide Chinese-language educational services for about half of the Chinese-dominant school children (Del Valle 2000: 237). This failure, they claimed, was a violation of their right to an equal educational opportunity because they could not learn in English. As Fitzpatrick observes, this argument signaled a major shift in the national thinking regarding bilingual education:

They argued that if the city required all children to attend school, but a child did not know English well enough to be instructed in English, the child had the civil right to be taught in a language he/she understood until English competency was achieved. Bilingualism thus became not an issue of voluntary participation in the government-funded Bilingual Education Act; it was shifted to a constitutional issue of the civil rights of a child in the schools of the United States. (1987: 166)

The Supreme Court did hold that this amounted to a denial of equal education and ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The *Lau v. Nichols* case was a major victory for bilingual education nationally, upholding bilingual cases throughout the country. It provided leverage for the plaintiffs in *ASPIRA v. Board of Education* to enter into a Consent decree with New York City as its corporation council realized that a new legal precedent had been established recognizing the language rights of English-language learners.¹⁹

The ASPIRA Consent Decree

The ASPIRA Consent decree mandated that the Board of Education provide English-language learners with access to a bilingual program and that ELL students be identified and classified as such annually (by no later than the first week of enrollment). It specified that these students receive the following: (1) a planned and systemic program designed to develop their ability to speak, understand, read, and write the English language; (2) instruction in substantive courses in Spanish so that they do not receive instruction in any substantive courses in a language that prevented their effective participation in any of those courses; and (3) a planned and systemic program designed to reinforce and develop their use of Spanish (ASPIRA 1974: 3). The Board of Education was ordered to provide monthly compliance reports to PRLDEF and to show cause to the court if they were unable to secure the funds to provide the services mandated by the consent decree.

While the transitional bilingual education programs established during this period have been the source of considerable debate since their inception, the signing of the consent decree represented much more than the provision of linguistically appropriate educational services to Puerto Rican children. The ASPIRA consent decree marked the political coming of age of the Puerto

Rican community and its influence upon the city's legal and institutional structures. Puerto Ricans asserted their growing political power and, as Congressman José Serrano has stated, "made New York a bilingual city."²⁰

The Board's newly established Office of Bilingual Education was headed by Hernan La Fountaine, the former assistant principal of I.S. 201 under the experimental district; he went on to found P.S. 25 in the Bronx, the first bilingual school in New York City in 1968. A successful and celebrated bilingual school, it would serve as a citywide model for bilingual education. With an infusion of 11 million dollars from the city, Chancellor Irving Anker estimated that 25,000 to 65,000 of the city's 1.1 million students would participate in the new program (Cordasco 1975: 381). Advocates remained concerned that the Board would not follow through because of the city's fiscal crisis. In a 1975 article about the consent decree, Francesco Cordasco observed that "the federal court consent decree 'to improve the education of all Spanish-speaking pupils' will be monitored with cautious optimism both in and outside of New York City" (1975: 382).

Links Between Community Control and the Consent Decree

Although the consent decree had multiple purposes, it originated as a pedagogical solution by Puerto Rican educators who had established experimental programs under community control and decentralization. César Perales reflected on the important role that teachers played in advocating for bilingual instruction as well as the need to increase the number of Puerto Rican teachers in the school system:

Bilingual education became a rallying cry primarily because there were a number of teachers, Latino and Puerto Rican teachers who were in that field that felt that this was a way to teach children effectively. And it also became involved with the whole sense of nationalism which is a very strong undercurrent in the Puerto Rican community. Language was very much part of who we were as a people and it was something that ought to be fostered not something that ought to be negated. So bilingual education had a number of underpinnings—nationalistic, educational, and others and was a vehicle to bring (Puerto Rican) teachers into the system.²¹

Implicit in the desire for instruction in the Spanish language (even while students learned English), respect for the Puerto Rican culture and those who embody it, and representation of professionals from this community were the goals of the community-control movement. Prime among these is an emphasis on valuing a Puerto Rican cultural identity that departs from that of the Eurocentric, English-dominant cultural aesthetic of the United States. Puerto Ricans were not interested in adopting a culturally and linguistically subtractive schooling processes;²² rather, because the schools had been so irresponsive to their needs for so long, they believed strongly that public schools could and should facilitate bilingual and bicultural development, allowing Puerto Rican and Latino students to engage and contribute meaningfully in the American mainstream without losing their linguistic and cultural identities. These educators saw bilingual education as a bridge that would make this possible.

After the consent decree was signed, United Bronx Parents, ASPIRA, PRLDEF, and other Puerto Rican organizations continued to organize, educate, and litigate within the new structures of governance and instruction they had helped to create.

This would begin to yield improved outcomes for Puerto Rican students and other English-language learners within and beyond New York City. The momentum generated from this victory for Puerto Ricans and the movement it generated influenced the creation of other institutions throughout the city—among them El Puente, a Puerto Rican/Latino community-based organization in Williamsburg that in 1991 started a Board of Education High School—El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice—based on principles of human rights and community control (Rivera and Pedraza 2000; De Jesús 2003).

By 1973, the elected community school board in District 4, the newly created East Harlem district advocated by Julio Morales and the East Harlem Coalition for Community Control, was predominantly Puerto Rican. This board generated policies and reforms that would have an impact on local, citywide, and national levels. The district 4 board hired Anthony Alvarado, an innovative young principal, as its superintendent. Alvarado is credited with creating the first bilingual district in the city, instituting a district-wide reading program, and initiating the establishment of alternative schools, the first of which was Deborah Meier's celebrated Central Park East school founded in 1974, a school that considerably influenced the small school reform movement in New York City and nationwide (Meier 1995). As Pedraza observes: "As a result of these and other changes by the 1980s District 4 had moved from last place in the reading test scores to a middle ranking among New York City school districts, at the time an impressive achievement" (1997: 78). Alvarado's leadership propelled him in 1983 into the chancellor's role, where he instituted many of these reforms citywide before leaving prematurely due to a personal financial indiscretion.

Conclusion: Sustained Struggles and Future Possibilities

When elected in 2001, Mayor Michael Bloomberg decried the decentralized school system as archaic and ineffective. In June 2003, the New York State legislature granted Bloomberg control of the New York City public schools, effectively eliminating the Board of Education and the 32 elected community school boards. Thus began a new era of mayoral control and a new set of reforms under Bloomberg's Chancellor Joel Klein that has demonstrated little interest in sharing power with communities.²³ Despite stating clear preferences for English-language immersion programs during his campaign, and once in office referring to the consent decree as a "legal labyrinth that constantly frustrates change" (Medina 2003), Bloomberg announced a 20 million dollar investment in bilingual education in June 2003 as a response to low approval ratings among the Latino community.²⁴ As with the initial implementation of the consent decree this investment was met with extremely cautious optimism by bilingual educators and advocates.

This review of the organizing and use of institutional levers by the Puerto Rican community during the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the *Brown and Lau* decisions, reveals the ways in which this community exercised political power to create more responsive structures for Puerto Rican students. During this period, Puerto Ricans who struggled alongside African Americans for community control of schools wondered how the promise of *Brown*—access to a high quality education—extended to their children and other children who did not speak English. *ASPIRA v. Board of Education* was their way of framing a solution after decades of the city's neglect.

From a policy perspective, the 1969 Decentralization law and the 1974 ASPIRA consent decree resolved ambiguity regarding how institutional structures should be organized to address the educational needs of disenfranchised communities, including those for whom English was a second language. More than anything, however, these policies represented a departure from the solutions espoused solely by established interests and reflected political concessions aimed at preventing major racial/ethnic conflict in New York City.²⁵ A thorough understanding of these events and the processes that shaped them is of great value to educators, advocates, and policy makers who believe that English language learners—who today speak over 170 languages in New York City—deserve the opportunity to master more than one language.

In recent years, anti-bilingual forces have gained momentum and defined their intent to “sunset” the consent decree.²⁶ Efforts to dismantle bilingual education and the recentralization of the schools represent a return to pre-Lau and pre-Brown structures—which were clearly ineffective in educating Puerto Rican students and explicitly denied rights to students of color. A return to a pre-consent decree situation would severely diminish the school system’s already limited ability to meet the needs of its English language learners. As the debate over bilingual education in New York City continues it is essential to note that the bilingual programs instituted as the result of the consent decree have extended far beyond the Puerto Rican community to benefit other Latino and immigrant communities from throughout the world who enroll in the New York City schools.

The right of participation of Puerto Ricans (and their language and culture) in the governance, administration, and instructional process was hard won during the era of community control and the ASPIRA consent decree. This is a fact that must be emphasized as antibilingual education forces seek to dismantle these programs. Understood in light of this historiography, the future of Puerto Ricans in New York City’s schools may be what Angelo Falcón (2001: 1) calls a *De’tras Pa’lante*—the “backward forward motion of a past and present that might most usefully point to that which has not yet happened.” If, during the next three decades of school wars, New York City’s diverse immigrant community succeeds in getting the school system to respond to the linguistic and educational needs of its children, it will be because Puerto Ricans helped to lay the foundation.



NOTES

¹ According to Ravitch, these wars have been waged over perpetually unresolved issues, which include “the relationship of religion to education, the proper means of governing the education system of a great city, and the challenge of educating the children of the poorest citizens” (Ravitch 2000: xxix).

² These reforms under mayoral control include replacement of the Board of Education (appointed by Borough Presidents and the mayor) with the Panel for Education Policy appointed by the mayor and the abolishment of 32 elected community school boards. They reflect a major re-centralization of decision-making authority in the city’s schools, one that alleged the previous structures were archaic and ineffective. Despite stating clear preferences for English-language immersion programs during his campaign, Bloomberg announced a 20 million dollar investment in bilingual education in June of 2003 by establishing an English Language Learner (ELL) Academy to train bilingual teachers and hire more than 100 coaches to support the work of bilingual teachers. This was done in response to low approval ratings among the Latino community.

³ For a thorough discussion, see Lee and Diaz (2007).

⁴ We are indebted to Lillian Jimenez of the Latino Educational Media Project for providing us with the transcripts of interviews she conducted with Isaura Santiago Santiago, Alice Cardona, and Hernan La Fontaine as part of the Documentary film project on Antonia Pantoja, entitled *Abriendo Camino*. In addition, we are grateful to Pedro Pedraza, Sonia Nieto, Julio Morales Jr., and Luis Nuñez for participating in additional interviews and providing important insights and ideas. While there were many other organizations and individuals who played important roles during this period, we will focus on these as a result of the accessibility of their stories. By no means is this treatment a comprehensive review of the period from all perspectives; we expect that there are many perspectives missing. We welcome correspondence with all who have contributions to make to this narrative.

⁵ The U.S. Census Bureau in 1971 reported that of the more than 1,400,000 Puerto Ricans living within the mainland U.S. 872,471 resided in New York State (5 percent of the state population) (Cordasco and Bucchioni 1972). Board of Education data in 1964 indicated 89,000 students or 8.4 percent of the total student population were limited English speakers. The majority of these students were Puerto Rican.

⁶ A 1963 report found that of 21,000 high school diplomas granted by the New York City schools only 331 were to Puerto Ricans (1.6 percent) although Puerto Ricans represented 7.2 percent of the high school population that year (U.S. Senate 1970—Antonia Pantoja testimony: 3686).

⁷ Gary Orfield (1996b: 99), reflecting on the Guiliani years, illustrates how these forces continue to plague New York City: “Amid huge cuts in the New York City school budget in 1995, New York City mayor Rudolf Guiliani continually assailed School Chancellor Ramón Cortines. After a frustrated and angry Cortines issued his resignation, five of the seven school board members argued that “to far too great an extent, this city’s school system has become a scapegoat, required to address the results of the city’s other ills—poverty, homelessness, the absence of other programs to assist children and families.”

⁸ Although the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was issued by the Supreme Court in 1954, which declared that it was unconstitutional to have segregated schools, the desegregation of schools was a process that did not happen quickly. Therefore, in 1955, in an effort to establish guidelines for the desegregation process, the court issued its *Brown II* decision, stating that school districts should work to desegregate “with

all deliberate speed” (http://www.africana.com/blackboard/bb_his_000141.htm, 2000 Educational Netcasting Foundation, Inc.).

⁹ Rodríguez-Morazzani (1997: 62) notes that the 1935 report was reflective of the devaluation of Puerto Rican people by the pseudoscience of eugenics, which, along with intelligence testing, was popular within educational and scientific communities. Of course, these characterizations have been applied to other Latino, African American, and immigrant communities throughout the U.S.

¹⁰ Hernán La Fontaine interview with Lillian Jiménez, Latino Educational Media Center.

¹¹ Alice Cardona interview with Anthony De Jesús, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.

¹² Community Control is not Decentralization. Centro Archives United Bronx Parents (B4 F3).

¹³ Julio Morales interview with Anthony De Jesús, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.

¹⁴ Julio Morales interview with Anthony De Jesús, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.

¹⁵ Although the 17 teachers fired or transferred in the Ocean Hill/Brownsville district were Jewish, the majority of the teachers who were hired in this district during the strike were also Jewish. The UFT conveniently downplayed this fact. For a thorough discussion on the anti-Semitism and racism dynamic, see Berube and Gittell (1969).

¹⁶ César Perales interview with Lillian Jimenez, Nov. 15, 2002.

¹⁷ César Perales interview with Lillian Jimenez, Nov. 15, 2002.

¹⁸ A consent decree is an agreement between involved parties submitted in writing to a court. Once approved by the judge, it becomes legally binding. (Civil Rights Consent Decree Overview at http://www.lapdonline.org/inside_lapd/cd/consent_decree.htm).

¹⁹ However, Del Valle (2000) observes that the method of language instruction that the courts endorsed was a sink-or-swim approach to language minority instruction—a strategy that has in fact contributed to transitional bilingual education’s troubled implementation.

²⁰ Comments at Encuentro Boricua Conference, Hostos Community College, April, 2004.

²¹ César Perales interview with Lillian Jimenez, Nov. 15, 2002.

²² For more discussion of subtractive schooling, see Valenzuela (1999).

²³ Perhaps the most poignant example occurred in March 2004, when Bloomberg exercised mayoral control by replacing two Latina members of the Panel for Education Policy who were going to vote against his wishes on a 3rd-grade retention policy. See *Fired for Disagreeing, Ex-Panelist Fears the Mayor Is Discouraging Advice He Needs to Hear*. *New York Times*, March 24, 2004.

²⁴ This investment was to establish an English Language Learner (ELL) Academy to train bilingual teachers and hire more than 100 coaches to support the work of bilingual teachers.

²⁵ The racial, socioeconomic, and cultural hostility that became obvious because of the confrontations in Ocean-Hill/Brownsville, I.S. 201, and Two Bridges in the late 1960s, has been alive and well and manifested over the years in the refusal of policymakers, bureaucrats, and teachers to implement the letter and spirit of these policies.

²⁶ In 1998 Mayor Rudolf Giuliani formed a task force with the intention of limiting the length of time students remained in bilingual classes. He made his intent to “sunset” the consent decree clear and invited California businessman Ron Unz, who had successfully shepherded anti-bilingual ballot initiatives in California and Arizona) to New York City. See Reyes (2000: 24).

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