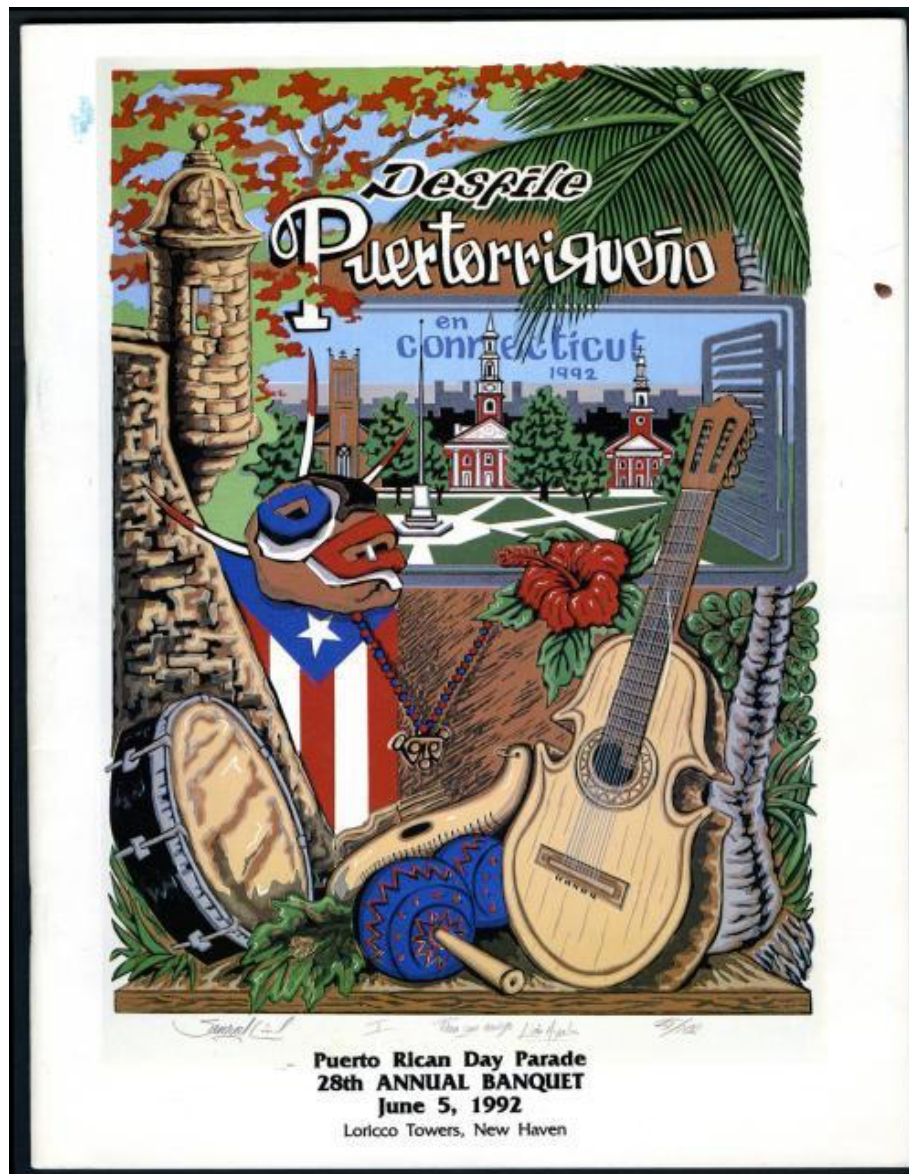


Source Pack 1

Source 1



Program booklet for the Puerto Rican Day Parade, 1992, designed by Samuel Lind.

Program: Puerto Rican Day Parade, 1992. CHS Collection, 2015.196.62.9

Background: The first Puerto Rican Day Parade in Connecticut was October 4, 1964. One goal of the parade was to encourage Puerto Ricans to register to vote and participate in elections. The other goal of the parade is to celebrate the state's Puerto Rican community. Connecticut's Puerto Rican Parade takes place in either Hartford, New Haven, or Waterbury each year. The Puerto Rican Parade has been held in New Haven for decades, under different organizers, and still continues along with an annual Festival Puertorriqueño in August. The commemorative booklet in 1992 featured a cover designed by noted Puerto Rican artist Samuel Lind, who signed this booklet.

Source 2

Nuestras Historias Oral History Interview Haydee Montalvo-Feliciano

This interview is from *Nuestras Historias - Our Histories* project. It was conducted in May of 2000. The Connecticut Historical Society collected several oral histories and photographs from a few of those who helped establish the Puerto Rican community in Hartford. These interviews were part of an online exhibition presenting the story through the words and images of the pioneers themselves. *Nuestras Historias* was funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the State of Connecticut, Department of Economic and Community Development, and the Connecticut Historical Society.

Vocabulary to know:

Interviewee: The person that is being interviewed is answering the questions - **Haydee Montalvo-Feliciano**, she is referred to in the interview as HF.

The interviewers: (people conducting the interview and asking the questions)

Ruth Glasser: and **Amanda Rivera-Lopez** . Ruth Ruth Glasser was a Professor in the Urban and Community Studies Department at the University of Connecticut. Her publications include: "My Music is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities, 1917-1940" (University of California Press, 1995), "Aquí Me Quedo: Puerto Ricans in Connecticut" (Connecticut Humanities Council, 1997), "Aquí Me Quedo K-12 Curriculum Guide" (Mattatuck Museum, 1999), [as co-editor] "Caribbean Connections: Dominican Republic" (Teaching for Change, 2004). She work on many community-based projects including books, curriculum projects, oral history projects, and exhibitions.

Transcription: This interview was recorded using an audio cassette recorder. A transcription is a written representation of audio recording. Background information about the interviewee is included in the transcription – these are the words not in quotations. The words of the interviewee are in quotations.

Olga Mele: Olga born in Guayama, Puerto Rico and moved to Connecticut in 1941. She was one of the first Puerto Ricans in Hartford. She devoted her life to building a foundation for social services for the Puerto Rican community in Hartford. She was the co-founder of the San Juan Center and a job counselor with the Community Renewal Team for many years.

Haydee Montalvo-Feliciano (HF)

Background: Haydee Montalvo-Feliciano came to the United States in 1956 and lived at 66 Main Street, Hartford. Her older brothers came to the United States in the 1940s to work in tobacco, then later at Weaver's Chicken. Haydee was the 20th of 22 children. She worked in a tobacco camp in Connecticut as a teenager. As an adult she worked as a volunteer interpreter for the Puerto Rican community in Connecticut. She also worked at the municipal hospital in Hartford. Below are selections from her interview. This is not the entire interview. This interview was conducted in Spanish on May 16, 2000 by Ruth Glasser and Amanda Rivera-Lopez. Ruth Glasser translated and transcribed this interview.

Transcription:

Tape 1, Side A

002: There were not many [PRs in the community]. "It was a pleasure to go outside and hear Spanish. Everything was English. She came 5/8/56. They lived at 65 Main St. The first who came in the 1940s were her older brothers, to work in tobacco. Tobacco was number 1, and then the nurseries, trees. Her brother suffered a lot in the camps, a lot of discrimination, bad food and salary. "They would go to PR and make... many promises of money and then when they came here the first thing that they had to reimburse the bosses for was the plane fare... Everything compared to today was very cheap. But almost everyone who traveled here were men... looking for a more stable life for their families. They would leave their wives, their children in PR, and that was difficult for them in the beginning. They suffered a lot for lack of... English, the culture, the food, there was no rice and beans like there is today... Today a PR comes and finds everything."

030: Her brother came when he was already married and had a child, through a friend of the owners of Weaver's Chicken, which they called "los pollos." "The tobacco camp had 2 races. You would find Puerto Ricans and Jamaicans. And through a Jamaican he got to know the... managers of the Weaver's company here in Htfd and they invited him to see if he wanted to work in Weaver's." Her brother said yes because he would earn more money. Weaver's asked him to get more workers like him from Puerto Rico. "And my brother started with the next brother, the next brother, the next continued sending for people." Their family were farmers, they lived in a *barrio* of San German, her mother was widowed when she was young and had 9 children. She had 22 children, HF was number 20. "My mother never wanted to leave PR, but by then everyone was here." The only ones left behind were her mother, her younger brother, her older brother and HF. Her brothers wanted to come to the US. Her mother was still in mourning for her father who had been dead for 9 years when the family migrated. HF was six years old when he died.

061: Her mother left the coffee farm to HF's uncle, and the house. The family came to the US in 1956. They lived at 66 Main St. The first thing her mother asked HF's brother was where the school was. Her brother had stayed in PR to finish junior high. Then he came here and began to work when he was 17. He didn't continue high school. Her mother "always told us that there were 2 things she wanted to leave to us. Two riches. They were religious faith and education. Because she never went to school." HF became her mother's teacher when she began school. "Everything that the teacher showed me in school I came home and practiced with her and I showed her how to print and to read the newspaper... She wanted to learn to read so that she could read the Bible." Another thing she wanted was that her children be honorable, that it wasn't a sin to ask, but it was a sin to rob. It was very important to be truthful and always behave honestly even if it killed you.

097: Her brother had studied English till 6th grade. HF went to St. Peter's Catholic School that was close to where she lived. The tuition was \$5 without the uniform. Now it's almost \$3000. She went to 5th and 6th grade [there]. Because she didn't know English she had to go back one grade. Her younger sister knew a little more English than HF did because her godmother had a bilingual daughter who had studied in NY. HF's sister came in 1957 and was in the same grade. There were very few PRs. "The streets where you would find the most Puerto Ricans were 60, 66 Main St, 44 Lawrence St, 1723 Main St and there were quite a lot of families... around Kennedy, Russell Sts, all that is gone now because they knocked everything down. There were many places to live there... in the Hartford of that time that no longer exist.

133: Her mother earned the family's living. "Many young men came alone from Puerto Rico, without wives, without mothers. So my mother spent all her time washing, ironing, cooking for single men who needed that kind of help. So they paid her... We didn't have a washing machine. At that time there was no television like there is now." It was a luxury. "My mother washed the clothing... by hand... in the old bathtub and she dried it outside. In the winter it was hard for her because you couldn't hang the clothes outside like you would in PR... And she also took care of the children... of my 2 brothers, she took care of 5 children."

189: "By that time... we were friends with doña Olga Mele since we came. She was always looking out [for us]... She lived on John St. But se, when we came, she had some compadres that lived next door to us. Next door in the same bldg... She was the kind of person who just as soon as she knew that a family had come from PR, she went [to see them] right away, she introduced herself, and she took you on with that affection and she got to work if there were needs and always with all the families that came, that way we began to make a community."

202: "In 1957, well, there was this priest, Father Andrew J. Cooney... He was at St. Peter's, and there he saw the needs of the community and he had an ongoing conversation with Archbishop O'Brien." He went above the pastor's head to the archbishop. "The archbishop assigned him to Sacred Heart... He would go visit the [tobacco] camps and he saw the needs. So that was when he got the idea to begin an office to serve the community. But he didn't have money... as a priest he didn't have a source, but... after the archbishop... accepted... The first office was opened which was the San Juan Catholic Center on Albany Ave... When I came that was already in formation... he was fighting and... it opened about a year afterward... He asked... to be able to give the Mass [in Spanish]... [Father Cooney's] Spanish was very broken... He'd gone to visit PR with Olga Mele, and... he told us children that he went to PR..." [thought is lost because of dog interruption]

238: Her first brother came here in '52 to work in tobacco. There were still Jamaicans working there. "We formed many friendships with the Jamaicans, Jamaican families who, like the PRs, left the tobacco farms and came to the city... Often... the PRs who were already working in the city and the majority here... there were many factories like Royal, there was Underwood, [where they made] typewriters... There was Weaver's Chicken... it was number one with the PRs. Because since... the '40s, well, they had been getting... PR workers... My brother brought more than 40 men from San German to come work at Weaver's... He wrote to them and then they came and they had work. When they came they already had the jobs... All my brothers worked at Weaver's, my 7 brothers."

272: "Going back to the opportunities for PRs in the '50s, it was very difficult. For example, doña Olga Mele, she had a scheme [*proceso*] where she took someone who knew a little English [to a factory]. Then when they told her, but he doesn't know English, well she told them but everything is manual and visual... if this guy learned [his job] he could communicate enough... They took him. They gave him the job because she... is a woman who still... continues... fighting in the community for those who need [help]... After she took 2 or 3 who didn't speak English and because of that they couldn't get work... This is at Royal... When they told her oh but they don't speak any English she told them but the one I brought you last week can be their interpreter. So 3 more entered. And that's how we went on."

296: "By '58, '59 Father Cooney saw that there was such a need in the farm camps that he then got in touch with the PR govt, the Dept of Agriculture, and then they sent... a representative here to CT... That office still exists which is La Casa de Puerto Rico... Before it was called the Office... of the Commonwealth of PR, this man named Camacho came to work there... He began... to continue to fight for the rights of the farmworkers... Well it was the govt that gave them permission to migrate..."

321: "Almost everyone who came here it was because they had to, not because they wanted to leave their homeland."

Tape 1 Side B

327: "My experience in school, that was very difficult. Because since I didn't speak English... the teachers... were all nuns. They sat me in the back of the rows of students, the last seat in the back, as a listener, nothing more. And already 3 months later, we read a poem. And I wanted to participate because in PR, well... I liked school. And I felt so, so alone, I couldn't communicate... Johnny Mele... was already in high school. So the only... other Puerto Rican was this girl, doña Olga Mele's daughter, Lydia. But Lydia spoke a lot of English... And she was 2 grades ahead of me, she was in 7th and... they put me in 5th... After 3 months the teacher, the nun, said, who wants to read the next line? And I remember that my little hand trembled... and I raised it... I know she [the nun] was dying for [*Joca porque*] me to participate. But she was waiting for me to take the initiative, and when she saw my hand up in the air, I was going to put it down, and she, "Ida" "

358: "My name is Haydee... When the principal asked my brother what my name was, he said Haydee, and she said Ida, and my brother said, yes, yes... All my school records up through college say Ida Montalvo... The game that the girls played with me, and I loved to play, was 'Idaho Potatoes.'... Jumping rope... And later we had a class reunion. And I said to [a former classmate], 'do you remember when you... made fun of me?... Do you remember when you used to trick me?... They were being cruel. And the teachers believed that I was enjoying it-- I was! I was enjoying it. I didn't know what Idaho potato was... And I always turned the rope and they jumped... One day I said, 'Wait a minute... I don't want to jump.' And they were, 'Oh yeah, yeah, Idaho potato,' all of them, all of them... Everyone in the St. Peter's schoolyard, you heard, 'Idaho Potato's jumping.'... And they applauded me. And I believed that I was a star. I didn't know that they were... laughing at... my name... Then when I went to go to the market with my mother, and I saw a bag of potatoes and it said Idaho Potatoes, I said, 'Oh my God.' Ah hah, that's what we have here... When I went back to school on Monday, I said to them, very seriously... 'My name is not Idaho Potato. My name is Haydee, and if you cannot pronounce Spanish, that's too bad... And my teacher [applauded]... because I started defending myself, I began to be... assertive, because... I was trying to please them. Because I wanted friends... and after that, they never again... called me Idaho Potato."

581: Father Cooney had the San Juan Catholic Center. 2 social workers, but that wasn't enough. They needed interpreters in the courts, hospitals, police headquarters. "Each time they...arrested [someone]...even for crossing the street because it was against the law...jaywalking...the ended up in Morgan...the police headquarters, arrested...In the summer of '56, my mama sent my brother to get...a liter of milk. Back then everything was in glass. You had to take the bottle and they gave you another bottle of milk...My mother and I were eating spaghetti and meatballs for lunch for 6 months, because it was the only thing that my cousin knew how to ask for at the store. You had to ask for everything...It was a snack bar in a little grocery store on the corner of Wyllys and Main...It was Saturday morning...My brother was...dressed...but he hadn't put on his shirt...He had his t-shirt [on]...He went out by himself to the corner to get the milk for my mama. When half an hour had gone by he hadn't come back. An hour went by, he didn't come back...I went out and when I went down the stairs, one of the neighbors was coming up and I asked him about my brother... And he said to me, *ay nena*, your brother Jose, the police took him away...They put the Puerto Ricans in...the police car in which they carried prisoners, the dog catcher's van [*perrera*]. Because in PR they go around the streets with...a truck like that...picking up stray dogs wandering around the city streets...Since they didn't know English, they called the paddy wagon 'la perrera.' "

655: "When the man told me that...they had taken him away in the perrera, I didn't know what the perrera was...My other brother...had a car...he went to Morgan and they had arrested him because he was naked from the waist up, in a t-shirt...My brother...paid the fine...a dollar or 2 dollars..." Nobody could walk barefoot in the street, without a shirt. "But we noticed that they didn't arrest the English-speaking Americans. It was the Puerto Rican and...the black. Because we knew a lot of Jamaican families...through...the tobacco farms."

Tape 2, Side A

001: "The supervisor didn't want me to be with the black girls...I said to her, but why do I have to go with my group? What are you trying to tell me? She said to me, no, because the blacks can't be with...the whites...I remember that I said, what?...I said to her, I am Puerto Rican... She says to me, that doesn't matter, but you're white. I said to her...what do you mean, white? And she says to me, well, never mind...If you don't want to lose your job, obey [me]...I didn't obey, and she dragged me, she pulled me and she took me by force...When I turned around, like this...my black friend was crying. And I say, when I got to my house...in the afternoon, I said to my mama, mami, I don't understand...And my mama said to me this, remember that the children of God are God's garden. Like we have gardens where we like to have different types of flowers, that's how we children of God are. If you like the rose, and your supervisor likes the carnation, well, tell her that she can keep her carnation...The next day, at lunchtime, I went with my friend. A little further under another tree. And when the...woman came, again to take me away, I said to her, don't you dare put a finger on me. I am blind...She says, you crazy?...I say, no, I'm not crazy. I'm colorblind...about skin. If you want me to separate from her, you have come to separate me from them [too]. Because we Puerto Ricans also have African roots. Not because they wanted to come to PR, but because they were taken as slaves to PR by the Spanish...And if you want me to lose my job, fine, but...I'm going to the Department of Labor and I'm going to talk to them about this because it's unfair. This girl, my friend, she is not black to me. She is human and she is my friend."

061: "This woman left, she never came back. Then the other girls were encouraged, and when we finished the summer, we didn't know who was from Florida, who was from Htfd, from E Htfd, from Manchester... That was the only thing that 14 year old students could do. And my husband worked in tobacco here. And my son worked in tobacco here. Because we wanted him to have the experience of what the tobacco is. Because the child who is put completely under [?]...becomes dependent...[his] first bicycle, a paper route...[her son went] to Park St to get the bus to go to the tobacco [farms]."

106: HF has worked in the community since she began to speak English. She got married when she was in HS. She stayed in the house, her husband didn't want her to work. Father Cooney had to close the San Juan Catholic Center office, because of the rent and salaries. He continued [it] in the church, in the basement. "Which I called the dungeon because it was like that... There a desk, an archive, telephone...I was about 5 months pregnant when... Father Cooney knocks at the door, that he needed me. Because the woman who was doing the office work of the SJ Catholic Center...had to...return to PR for an emergency and she wasn't coming back." HF spoke with her husband, she wanted to work, she began to work, they started St. Vincent DePaul in the basement, in a closet "I collected rich people's clothes and they brought me their clothes, their furniture, and I would make lists of needy families in the community...In...a station wagon I took them the clothes myself."

135: The need still existed at the municipal hospital. The mayor was Kinsella. The PRs fought to have someone to help the people in the hospital. One day the mayor's secretary called her, she wanted her to translate the exam into Spanish. HF's son had been born by that time, her mother took care of him. She said to Father Cooney that she was going to get a person for his office and then she was going to take the exam. In the Centro San Juan HF was the interpreter in juvenile, municipal, circuit court, city welfare, state welfare, she helped all the Cuban refugees. Always working with Olga Mele.

Source 3



Housing conditions protest, Hartford city hall, 1960s. CHS Collection, 1988.142.3

Background: The 1960s was a time of national civil unrest and CT was not immune from that. CT cities experience protests against unfair housing and other issues.