

No Más Bebés: Puerto Rican Women as “Misfits” in the Experimentation and Exploitation of Population, Fertility and Birth Control

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ABSTRACT: This analysis examines the history of forced sterilization and birth control testing of Latina women by using Puerto Rico as a case study. By examining this historically important case, I clarify the reasoning that perpetuates the exploitation of the Latina female body. Specifically, I argue that the United States is a neocolonialist nation that has practiced eugenics on the Puerto Rican female population through fertility control and birth control testing as a continued form of exploitation and desired eradication of Puerto Rican people and their culture. The United States, upon conquering the nation used the land and people of Puerto Rico, for experimentation of their medications and used eugenic practices to Americanize the Puerto Rican culture. This analysis begins with the ratification of Law 116 in 1937 that legalized and funded coercive and forced sterilization in Puerto Rico, follows with “guinea pig” birth control testing on Puerto Rican women, and finishes by discussing the continuation of fertility control practices on Latina women in the continental United States. Data has been collected through American and Puerto Rican scholarly journals, eugenics archives, and documentaries with direct documentation of Latina women's voices. This analysis uncovers the root causes of forced sterilization and works to use this information as a political and sociological basis for eradicating the practice and preserving the Puerto Rican and, further, the Latina culture in the United States.

Introduction

Puerto Rico’s sadistic patterns of forced sterilization of its female population are without parallel. While other nations have witnessed considerable sterilization that should not go unacknowledged, Puerto Rican women have held the record for the highest sterilization rates in the world by population since 1968 at 35%.¹ The two other leading nations in sterilization rates are India and Pakistan who have had similar programs implemented - though their initiatives

¹ Nancy Ordovery, "Puerto Rico: Law 116." *Eugenics Archive*, 24 Feb. 2014, eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/530ba18176f0db569b00001b#:~:text=In%201937%2C%20Puerto%20Rico%20enacted,116%2C%20but%20by%20US%20colonialism.

have only resulted in 5% and 3% of the total population sterilized, respectively.² This paper will examine the political and socio-political causes for such rates of sterilization, focusing on the colonial and neocolonial relationship between the United States (US) and Puerto Rico, and the eugenic attitudes and practices within this relationship. Specifically, I argue that the United States is a neocolonialist nation that has practiced eugenics on the Puerto Rican female population through fertility control and birth control testing as a continued form of exploitation and a means to achieve the desired eradication of Puerto Rican people and their culture. Through this lens, I will explain US-promoted sterilization of Puerto Rican women, examine how the United States justifies these policies and practices, and describe how these legacies and practices live on today. It will incorporate the voices of Puerto Rican women to do this; challenging many United States scholars that have argued that sterilization was for other reasons than the colonialist and eugenic reasons that I will argue in this essay.³

Understanding the root causes of forced sterilization in Puerto Rico requires understanding the neocolonial practices of the United States. The economic impact that the United States has had on Puerto Rico follows the pattern of Spanish colonial rule in Latin America. James Mahoney has studied the phenomenon and concluded that a regional hierarchy

² CWLU Herstory Project, “35% Of Puerto Rican Women Sterilized,” CWLU HERSTORY (CWLU HERSTORY, September 19, 2016), <http://www.cwluherstory.org/health/35-of-puerto-rican-women-sterilized>.

³ Kurt W. Back, Reuben Hill, and J. Mayone Stycos, “Population Control in Puerto Rico: The Formal and Informal Framework,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 25, no. 3 (1960): p. 558, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1190755>. Black and his fellow authors write about the occurrence in Puerto Rico from a US perspective. They make claims contradictory to Puerto Rican citizens including the following: the case study of Puerto Rico can be used to justify the success of US interference in issues of other nations (p. 560); comparing sterilization to other forms of disease control and vaccination to justify measures that go against social norms to sometimes be the most beneficial options (p. 562); claiming that since the change from agricultural to industrialized industry the limitation of family has been favored solely because there is no need for agricultural workers while Puerto Ricans express wanting the same amount of children or reduced numbers of children because they are unable to financially provide in industrialized occupations (p. 567); and that birth control was favored in the nation even with its Roman Catholic history because it is a “greater sin if children having nothing to eat” without acknowledging the US changes that increased nationwide poverty (p. 569).

has remained stable over time. Areas that were peripheral to the colonial centers became more developed while those areas that were in colonial centers became less developed.⁴ Puerto Rico has similarly suffered with its close attachment to the United States. After obtaining the land in 1898 following the Spanish American War, the US transformed the agriculturally based economy into a sugar monoculture, which caused high unemployment, uneven employment, and increasing poverty rates. Within the first 25 years of US hegemony over Puerto Rico, the economy was altered to mimic the US capitalist system premised on industrialization and manufacturing. This system spurred internal migration among the Puerto Rican population to condensed areas of the island creating the false image of overpopulation. United States' officials would come to base their argument for the use of sterilization and birth control on this fallacy. This "overpopulation," however, was "more the result of U.S. capitalist, policy and legislative interests than of uncontrollable growth in population."⁵

To elaborate this analysis, the first section focuses on foundational language by setting out the differences between "population control," "fertility control," and "birth control." Showing the misuse of this language by the US, I characterize the United States as a nation that has adopted eugenic mindsets and practices over the nation of Puerto Rico and the Latina population within the states as well. The next section examines the history of Puerto Rican women as "guinea pigs" in American birth control experimentation focusing on the role of well-known educators like Margaret Sanger. Next, I look at forced sterilization as a means of addressing Puerto Rico's "overpopulation." The final section examines the continued exploitation of the Latina body and seeks to give voice to the sterilized women, whose

⁴ James Mahoney, "Colonialism and Postcolonial Development," 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511750328>.

⁵ Iris Lopez, "Agency And Constraint: Sterilization And Reproductive Freedom Among Puerto Rican Women In New York City." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, vol. 22, no. 3/4, 1993: pp. 299-324, 302.

perspectives are often exempt from or misrepresented in US-based discussions on the matter.⁶ I end by noting that sterilization is “an issue that tends to be viewed as a tragic-but past occurrence, [that] continues today,” urging addressment of the issue before Puerto Rican and Latina cultures and peoples are fully eradicated.⁷

Population, Fertility, and Birth Control and the Exploitation of their Meanings as Contributions to the Exploitation of Puerto Rican Women

The terms birth control and fertility control have both been used in discussion of an “overpopulation cure.” To better understand the forced sterilization, it is important to distinguish between these different forms of control, which had coercive implications in the case of Puerto Rico. I will use population control and fertility control interchangeably in this case. Since efforts to control population were done mostly through fertility control, I make the two terms synonymous. Fertility control is a policy that grants the government control of fertility as opposed to the individual right to control one’s own fertility. By using a more euphemistic term like population control, the United States was able to circumvent accusations of eugenics that are historically tied to the term fertility control. As I will show in the next section, Thomas Malthus and Law 116 adopted the language of population control for this very reason. Eugenic language has explicitly used the mechanisms of fertility control on “burdens of society they believe should not procreate.”⁸

Birth control is instilled with the idea of choice over reproduction; however, I will argue in the next section that this choice was stripped from the Puerto Rican population as well. Birth

⁶ Black et al., 558-566; Ana María García, *La Operación* (Latin American Film Project, 1982).

⁷ Kathryn Kruse, “The History of Forced Sterilization in the United States,” *Our Bodies Ourselves*, September 21, 2020, <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/book-excerpts/health-article/forced-sterilization/>.

⁸ Lopez, “Agency And Constraint,” 304.

control is a means by which an individual is able to control their own fertility. They are classified as reversible contraception methods that temporarily eliminate or reduce the ability for an individual to reproduce. Unlike fertility and population control, forms of birth control are temporary and reversible, still allowing for the ability to reproduce once birth control is stopped. Sterilization cannot be considered a form of birth control, as it was often advertised, because it takes away the ability to reproduce entirely, therefore rendering it fertility control. The second wave of population control urged by the US after 1960 promoted sterilization as the “best form of birth control” misleading the choice of Puerto Rican women to “voluntarily” be sterilized.⁹

Eugenics and the Making of the Puerto Rican Woman into the “Misfit”

In addition to the exploitative policies enacted under colonialism, eugenics was the foundational motivation behind the sterilization of and experimentation on Puerto Rican women. The United States sought to occupy the territory of Puerto Rico during a time when politics was invested in the work of Thomas Malthus, an Englishman who has been termed the father of population control policy by applying Darwinism to poor populations. He was a strong believer in the “great biological law,” which argued that the rich were genetically superior to the poor. His theory directly blamed poverty and underdevelopment on overpopulation caused by “unnecessary” and “excessive” birth within the poor communities. Neo-Malthusians, including those in the US, combine Malthusian beliefs of the poor, eugenics, and social Darwinism. The United States sought to cover their eugenic identity by calling their Neo-Malthusian movement “Operation Bootstrap,” which alludes to the meritocratic and neoliberal idea of the American term “pull yourself up by your bootstraps.” Through this operation, sterilization was advertised

⁹ Katherine Andrews, “The Dark History of Forced Sterilization of Latina Women,” Panoramas, October 31, 2017, <http://www.panoramas.pitt.edu/health-and-society/dark-history-forced-sterilization-latina-women>.

as the only means of controlling the population, and overpopulation was blamed on individual action.¹⁰

I will extend this idea that the rich are more biologically and socially fit to reproduce than the poor, defining the Puerto Rican woman as a “Misfit,” a term often used in Disability Studies. The historical description of a woman that is to be sterilized as “unfit” makes the program inextricably eugenic as the physically and intellectually disabled community were those sought out for reproduction prevention. The eugenic movement in the US sought to sterilize any individual that was considered genetically or intellectually inferior. López has noted that in the case of Puerto Rico and all of the United States, eugenics has been “inexorably tied to racism.”¹¹ Margaret Sanger, the leading promoter of birth control testing, used the language of eugenics and partnered with self-proclaimed eugenicists. In her book, *The Pivot of Civilization*, Sanger argues that the use of birth control and sterilization was “nothing more than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives.”¹² A documentary recording Latina women in the United States who were forcefully sterilized without consent claimed themselves to be “Misfits”: “the US was ridding the state of us so called misfits.”¹³ The political and social realms are inextricably linked - how you are viewed socially is indicative of how you are treated politically. I argue that this labelling of the Puerto Rican woman as a social “Misfit” allows us to examine the issue through the lens

¹⁰ Iris Ofelia López, *Matters of Choice: Puerto Rican Women's Struggle for Reproductive Freedom*. Rutgers University Press, 2008.

¹¹ López, *Matters of Choice*.

¹² Anne Barbeau Gardiner, "Unfit to be Tied: Review on Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy: The Control of Female Fertility." *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, July 2006, 229.

¹³ *No Más Bebés* (Independent Lens, PBS, 2016).

of disability. Since disability is a political issue often seeking to be cured, I argue that eugenics becomes the route to eradicate the world of this “disability.”

In 1937, Law 116 was passed by the United States, which established a sterilization program in Puerto Rico. It was eventually repealed in 1960, retaining the title of the last eugenics sterilization law passed under United States territorial jurisdiction. Though information on Law 116 is scarce, the Eugenics Archive notes the colonial impact of eugenics stating that sterilization was “assured not merely by Law 116, but by US colonialism” and further begins to unpack the deeply rooted racially and ethnically biased eugenic properties of this law and sterilization practices at large.¹⁴ Law 116 signified the institutionalization of US efforts for population control as a proclaimed effort to “catalyze economic growth and respond to depression-era unemployment.”¹⁵

In 1939, two years after the passing of Law 116, US doctor Clarence Gamble was granted permission by the United States under Franklin Roosevelt’s Puerto Rican Relief Administration to establish recruiting sites for sterilization in Puerto Rico. He flew Puerto Rican doctors to New York to learn the latest sterilization techniques. Gamble, who was a self-proclaimed eugenicist, was a main contributor to sterilization and birth control testing. Gamble was actively supported to spread his work to Puerto Rico, specifically the highly industrialized region of San Juan, opening pharmaceutical companies and testing trials funded by the United States when it was illegal in the United States at the time.¹⁶ Further, the entire medical apparatus was formed by the

¹⁴ Ordover, "Puerto Rico: Law 116."

¹⁵ Kruse, "Forced Sterilization United States."

¹⁶ Ordover, "Puerto Rico: Law 116."

US, hospitals were funded with US money, and most doctors were trained in or are directly from the United States, especially those that performed the sterilizations.

Secretive Birth Control Testing with the Puerto Rican Woman as the “Guinea Pig”

The first birth control pill was called Enovid, a “pill that has a bright future, but its past – one intertwined with eugenics and colonialism – was fraught.”¹⁷ I posit that this pill was another attempt, following the waves of mass forced sterilization, to eradicate the Puerto Rican population by the United States.

Margaret Sanger was the pioneer of modern birth control. Through her lifetime she refused to call herself a eugenicist, though the language she used was common in the eugenics movement. American historians and scholars have challenged those who call Sanger a racist and a eugenicist; however, they still admit that she did make some “deeply disturbing” statements in support of eugenics. She wrote in 1921 that “the most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage over-fertility of the mentally and physically disabled.”¹⁸ She argued that birth control could help wipe out “the greatest menace to civilization,” which she believed to be people living in extreme poverty and those with mental illnesses and physical disabilities.¹⁹ Therefore, if we understand the Puerto Rican woman as a Misfit, she represents a population Sanger would be likely to target for birth control. Sanger took economic implications into consideration as well. López argues that

¹⁷ Erin Blakemore, “The First Birth Control Pill Used Puerto Rican Women as Guinea Pigs,” History.com (A&E Television Networks, May 9, 2018), <http://www.history.com/news/birth-control-pill-history-puerto-rico-enovid>.

¹⁸ Jennifer Latson, “Margaret Sanger, Race and Eugenics: A Complicated History,” Time (Time, October 14, 2016), <https://time.com/4081760/margaret-sanger-history-eugenics/>.

¹⁹ Blakemore, “First Birth Control Pill.”

Sanger used eugenics as a rationale to convince the powers-that-be that even though all women needed birth control, the state would greatly benefit if poor (and non-white) women, in particular, had access to it. As a result, while birth control was considered a privilege for upper-class white women, it was deemed mandatory for poor black and some white women, especially those considered “mentally challenged.”²⁰ Her book *The Need of Birth Control in America* invokes eugenic language as she speaks of the “wickedness of large families” and birth control’s potential ability to eliminate “cheap human beings.”²¹ Overall, Sanger can be noted as having an “inhumane life’s work.”²²

Gamble and Sanger also collaborated with Gregory Pincus, an innovative researcher in mammalian sexual physiology and therefore a questionable choice to partner with for a birth control trial on humans. Testing was done simultaneously on rats, rabbits, and Puerto Rican women, dehumanizing these women in a form of reproductive oppression. Pincus was able to receive funding for initial testing by obtaining US permission for a trial on “fertility control” instead of birth control given the illegality of and controversy surrounding birth control in the United States at the time. Puerto Rico’s birth control history has strong ties to the US as movements for both occurred during the same time period. President Roosevelt supported birth control testing instead of further emigration of the Puerto Rican population, therefore funding the trial in whole through US government sponsorship.²³ For these reasons, permission was given to test the human population in the non-continental United States, rendering Puerto Rico as the testing site.

²⁰ López, *Matters of Choice*, 5.

²¹ Gardiner, “Unfit to be Tied,” 229.

²² Latson, “Margaret Sanger Really Said.”

²³ López, *Matters of Choice*.

Birth control testing in Puerto Rico began in the 1950s under intense secrecy. The women participating were not told that the pill they were taking was a trial and that the visits following were to monitor the pill's success. The women were also not told of any potential risks of the drug. Three women died during this test phase though their deaths were never investigated. Many scholars claim that women were purposefully given substantially high doses that physicians knew would cause issues and be lethal in certain cases, illustrating the role of colonial exploitation and eugenics.²⁴ Nancy Ordover, a member of the Eugenics Archive, found that "side effects, which included nausea, dizziness, headaches, were dismissed by researchers as psychological or blamed on Puerto Rican women themselves who were constructed as lacking the intellectual sophistication to follow directions."²⁵

Forced Sterilization in Puerto Rico

By 1968, Puerto Rico held the title for highest rates of sterilization by population globally. By 1976, 37% of females were sterilized.²⁶ Throughout the 1960s, women in Puerto Rico were ten times more likely to be sterilized than women in the United States [this statistic, however, exempts the Puerto Rican and other Latina populations residing in the US who will be examined in the next section].²⁷ The sterilization was forced in two ways: (1) as an uneducated "choice" and (2) as performed without consent after birth by cesarean delivery.

1. Verbally documented accounts of Puerto Rican women taken in 1982 claimed that there was an unclear communication on their chosen sterilization. A multitude of women were falsely told that the procedure was temporary or reversible. Others were led astray by the

²⁴ Blakemore, "First Birth Control Pill."

²⁵ Ordover, "Puerto Rico: Law 116."

²⁶ Ordover, "Puerto Rico: Law 116."

²⁷ Krase, "Forced Sterilization United States."

euphemism for tubal ligation: “tying the tubes” and its equivalent *ligaron* in Puerto Rican tongue. *Ligaron* has traditionally been used to describe the act of tying to children – often tying with rope, handcuffs, or tape which are all reversible forms of tying – which contributed to the false sense that the procedure was reversible.

Many women were initially led to choose sterilization because there was no form of birth control available, while the instated impoverished conditions and factory jobs made sterilization the only way to economically survive. Sterilization was free, which made it even more appealing to the industrially working poor. Sterilization offices were established in factories where women worked, through the funding of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the women were given time off to go to the clinic and have the procedure done.²⁸ I state that US policy was therefore promoting the use of permanent sterilization instead of safe, legal, and reversible contraception. Encouragement was given by door-to-door visits and financial subsidies awarded to women who had completed the procedure and employers who were given grants for employee favoritism toward hiring sterilized women.²⁹

Therefore, these factors rendered sterilization not a choice, but a means of survival within the conditions that the US generated in Puerto Rico. While other women were given more of a choice - choosing sterilization as an “element of resistance” against constraints of patriarchy and female subordination which created a double standard of the women in the private and public realm - these women were in the numerical minority.³⁰

²⁸ Andrews, "The Dark History"; García, *La Operación*.

²⁹ Krase, "Forced Sterilization United States."

³⁰ Lopez, "Agency And Constraint."

2. I use the term forced here as a form of violence. Operations performed without consent in hospitals characterized most of the sterilizations of Puerto Rican women. A 1965 survey estimated that one-third of all Puerto Rican mothers between the ages of twenty and forty-nine were sterile, most of them being sterilized after giving birth in their mid-twenties.³¹ Sterilization by this method was prevalent in Puerto Rico from the 1930s to the 1950s. Doctors in training, many of which were Gamble's students, were instructed that any woman coming into the delivery room with two or more children was to have her tubes tied after giving birth.³² The peak of postpartum sterilizations was in 1947.³³ In 1949, 17.8% of hospital births were followed by sterilization; this did not account for home births with complications resulting in hospitalization after birth that resulted in sterilization to "fix" the complications. It is believed that many of the sterilizations performed were never documented in hospital records making the statistic lower than the percentages found through interviewing the women. Hospital birth rates were at 10% in 1940, 37.7% in 1950, 77.5% in 1960, and reached 90% in 1965.³⁴ I note here that compulsory sterilization was outlawed in 1945, however, abuse still continued, and as the statistics above show, rates actually increased by substantial amounts.³⁵

Continued Exploitation of the Latina Body in the United States

The continuation of sterilization abuse was not only occurring in Puerto Rico but also among Puerto Rican migrants and other Latina women in the United States. Sterilization in the states became prevalent in the 1950s, ironically at the same time of Puerto Rican influx caused

³¹ Krase, "Forced Sterilization United States."

³² CWLU Herstory Project, "Puerto Rican Women Sterilized."

³³ Andrews, "The Dark History."

³⁴ CWLU Herstory Project, "Puerto Rican Women Sterilized."

³⁵ López, *Matters of Choice*.

by forced migration, intensifying in the 1970s with the second wave of migration. Between the years of 1945 to 1964, one million people migrated, which accounts for more than one-third of the population; the levels of migrants and those sterilized in Puerto Rico had become equal.³⁶ Sterilization only occurred in twelve states – those with the highest levels of Latina populations – but most of it was centered in New York, the main migration location of Puerto Ricans; and California, which had a larger population of Latina women, specifically Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.³⁷ Abuse of this nature still occurs to this day. In this section, I explore the Latina woman's voice by using accounts from a documentary episode called *NO MÁS BEBÉS* in a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) series called *Independent Lens* that was directed by Renee Tajima-Pena.³⁸

“They said you signed for it. I said me? I do not remember.”³⁹ This was a common iteration among the Latina women who faced the second type of sterilization discussed in the previous section: sterilization after birth without consent. Most of the sterilizations in the United States' hospitals were in public spaces that housed a crowded number of women in the hallways on gurneys, unlike the separate rooms found in private hospitals. The film stated that this was because private physicians did not seek to take care of “these people [Latina women].”⁴⁰ Most of the women who were sterilized were on welfare and without legal citizenship; they were also mainly Spanish speaking with little comprehension, if any, of the English language. The legal documents that had to be signed for the procedure to be done were only provided in English. Doctors would instruct nurses to have the women sign these papers at the peak of labor pain

³⁶ García, *La Operación*.

³⁷ Lopez, "Agency And Constraint."

³⁸ Tajima-Pena, "NO MÁS BEBÉS."

³⁹ Tajima-Pena, "NO MÁS BEBÉS."

⁴⁰ Tajima-Pena, "NO MÁS BEBÉS."

promising that the procedure would take away their agony. Many signed because they believed that this was a means of taking care of themselves and their baby. If the mother was hesitant, the nurses threatened that refusing the procedure could cause their baby's death.

Sterilization abuse also occurred in other ways: women were uneducated of the procedure, if they were educated at all, and there was much misunderstanding of the term *ligaron* and another Spanish phrase that made many women equate sterilization with a form of cleaning. While these women were sterilized at later dates, most occurring in the 1970s, the demographics were similar: sterilization taking place in the woman's mid-twenties and with most of the women holding industrial occupations as factory workers. Unlike in Puerto Rico, the Latina women of the states openly described their experience as traumatic and experienced symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), although very little has been documented from the perspective of the Puerto Rican women. Women in the states have compared their sterilization to the "first tactics of the Germans [in the Holocaust]" and described the examinations before the procedure as being "like rape." Sterilized women with small families who were asked when they were going to have another child stated it was "enough to make them cry."⁴¹

I argue that the colonial eugenics mindset followed the Latina women into the United States. While these sterilizations were performed on the colonial homeland, the vision to eradicate the Latina culture and population was still vividly present. Sterilization in the states was even more socially engineered and organized. In the words of some doctors, "What I gained this year was a new kind of prejudice. I never had anything against Mexicans [read the Latina population at large] when I came here."⁴² The United States was teaching a form of racism and

⁴¹ Tajima-Pena, "NO MÁ S BEBÉS."

⁴² Tajima-Pena, "NO MÁ S BEBÉS."

eugenic practices to their doctors who treated Latina women. Within the closing statement of *Madrigal v Quilligan* - a lawsuit based in Los Angeles, California debating the legality and humanity of the sterilization of Latina women without consent or through misinformed coercion - Judge Jesse W Cutis stated on June 3, 1973 that “the cultural background of these particular women contributed to the problem [of sterilization that was being fought against].”⁴³

Importantly, while the population demographic affected by this eugenic sterilization was broadened to all Latina women, the Puerto Rican population still suffered the most, which strengthens the colonial implications of these practices. Puerto Rican women in New York still have the highest sterilization rates in all of the United States. Further, 93% of the Puerto Rican New York residents who were sterilized were born on the island, migrated to the states in their youth, and were sterilized there between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one - a significantly lower age than those on the island. This therefore hindered the ability for any children to be born to the Puerto Rican population in the Contiguous United States.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Sterilization abuse in Puerto Rico and against Latina women more broadly is a political and cultural phenomenon. The US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare spends \$750,000 of their \$900,000 budget for Puerto Rican Relief Funds on family planning still today. Sterilization continues in the continental United States, especially in California, and is focused primarily on Latina populations.⁴⁵ Population and fertility control are socio-political oppressions, in this case, caused by the eugenic colonialism of the United States. Social and economic forces have limited fertility options for Puerto Rican and Latina women, as a direct result of US control

⁴³ Tajima-Pena, "NO MÁS BEBÉS."

⁴⁴ Lopez, "Agency and Constraint."

⁴⁵ CWLU Herstory Project, "Puerto Rican Women Sterilized."

over the reproductive female body. While abuse continues, so does this hidden reality, silencing the voices of sterilized women in another form of eradication. As sterilization and exploitation of the Latina body persists “the dark history of these operations remains understudied and hidden in the shadows of history.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Andrews, "The Dark History."

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