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Enduring Resilience: An Exploration of Puerto Rican Colonization, Hurricane Maria, and Ongoing Healing through Cultural Rituals

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Enduring Resilience

An Exploration of Puerto Rican Colonization, Hurricane Maria, and Ongoing Healing through
Cultural Rituals

Capstone Thesis Literature Review

Lesley University

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Dance/Movement Therapy

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to illuminate the economic, cultural and social subjugation of Puerto Rico, and its people, through the stripping of personal and political self-determination imposed by U.S. colonization. This research explores historic examples of Puerto Rican perseverance and analyzes psychologically protective factors supporting survivorship and resilience, such as familism and ontological security. The effects of Hurricane Maria on mental health are highlighted in the research, as is the correlation between a lack of electrical power and adverse health/wellness outcomes. Models for collective liberation and social justice are discussed and exemplified through the case study of a march that took place in Boston, MA on the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria. The concepts of the shock doctrine and disaster capitalism are explained and connected to various historic moments in Puerto Rico, including after Hurricane Maria. Bomba and Afro-Caribbean dance/rituals are explained and connected to practices in liberation. The current absence of Bomba and Afro-Caribbean dance in the dance therapy field are used to exemplify areas of growth necessary for making dance therapy more inclusive and increase the field's growth in cultural humility. This thesis also incorporates analysis of cultural competence and systemic oppression throughout and concludes with a call for dance therapists to be more active in advocating for social justice through their individual and clinical practice.

Keywords: Bomba, Puerto Rico, Afro-Caribbean, Boricua, Hurricane Maria, Liberation Health, Social Justice, Dance/Movement Therapy, Colonization, Self-Determination, Familism, Ontological Security, Cultural Humility, Cultural Competence

Prologue

There is an old tale in Latin America of a foreign tyrant who tried to bury the truth of his abuses. Legend has it he was cruel and selfish. He aggressively conquered other lands through violence and enslaved the natives. He continuously wanted more power and wealth, but eventually living with the truth stood in his way. So, one night, he went deep into the jungle, shouted the truth into the palms of his hands, and buried it in a deep hole he had laboriously made. He left, not knowing that two peasants had been watching him. When he was gone, they rushed to unbury the truth, but all that was left of it was a seed. They planted the seed and guarded it with their shovels and machetes, eventually falling asleep. That night the tyrant awoke at midnight and feared the truth had been unburied. He ran to the burial site and found a large tree standing on the exact same spot. Around the tree stood dozens of peasants protecting it. At this point, it was too tall, too wide, and impossible to destroy. Then, a wind blew by the leaves, and the tree sang out the truth. With the truth still echoing in the jungle, the peasants drove the tyrant out of their native land with their shovels and machetes. The truth had set them free (Bergmann, 1977).

I share this story because it exemplifies what my process and motivation have been throughout this research. As a Latinx woman, with roots in Cuba and Puerto Rico, I have sought out that seed of truth because I want liberation for my people and all peoples who have been oppressed by the same tyrant, and I want liberation for myself. This process has not been easy; the tyrants have made it incredibly hard to learn my historical truths, and the extraction of this knowledge has often left me feeling unwell, nauseous, anxious, afraid, immobilized, trapped, panicked, pained and depressed. It has also awoken my awareness of the generational trauma that lives inside my body and mind. I have pushed myself to continue digging, even when feeling broken inside. Much like the peasants in the story, who strove to uncover and protect their truth,

I refused to change my topic because I felt obsessed with finding mine, with too much feeling at stake if I did not persevere.

Choosing this topic and being a person of color in a white-dominated field has created an unspoken responsibility that feels like the liberation of my people rests on me doing an excellent job. Throughout this research process and my time at Lesley University, I have felt increasingly alone because of the isolating environment and stressful demands of academia, while balancing motherhood, and not having enough trust and allies in my academic community. My classes have reminded me constantly that higher education is not designed for me to succeed in. The Eurocentric curriculum, the teaching by mostly white professors, and the mostly white, female and socio-economically affluent student body are some of those reminders. While my experience as a grad student influences this thesis, it is about much more; it is about seeking liberation.

This essay intentionally seeks to share the bits and pieces of truths I have found. I hope these seeds begin to find themselves in the hearts and minds of other Boricuas (a term for Puerto Ricans, which evokes our connection to our indigenous roots), who have also been on this quest. I hope it finds solidarity with other oppressed groups and allies because *en la union esta la fuerza* (in unity there is strength). I hope it brings the needed discomfort to white communities that have often denied their privilege. I hope it supports their path in understanding the myth of meritocracy and the need to unpack (Macintosh, 2010) their privilege so they can stop being part of the problem and begin supporting the solutions that communities of color are leading.

We win liberation when we work collectively. The knowledge I have learned was also found collectively, and I dedicate this work to all of the people whom I have crossed paths with. This thesis will build with the knowledge and work of other scholars, activists, and Boricuas on and off the island who have shared their lived experiences with me in person, through readings, through dance, theater, artwork, and in actions for social change. Together we have shared our

histories of colonization and the patterns that exist where histories of brutality, colonialism, and genocide are ignored by our own country, erased from history, and rebranded (i.e., Columbus Day). We have witnessed Boricuas be historically characterized as lazy, dirty, and oversexualized (Aranda & Rivera, 2016; Castañon, 2018; Griffin, 2017; Gonzalez, 2017), while Puerto Rican culture and land is marketed by and for our colonizers as merely existing for their enjoyment.

These experiences are not coincidental and are part of institutionalized oppression and cultural appropriation¹. As an aspiring therapist, community healer, and advocate, I am increasingly forced to grapple with the physical and psychological levels of trauma and harm oppression causes. I firmly believe that my community and other marginalized communities deserve dignity and I am in solidarity with the struggle for the liberation of communities of color and other marginalized groups.

As you read my thesis, know that I, Jasmin Isabel Torrejón, am a self-identified Boricua and Cuban-American born and raised in Boston, MA by my biological family. I identify as a person of color who benefits from colorism because I am light-skinned and white-passing, a privilege I find crucial to acknowledge. Additionally, I come from a middle-class family, am cis-gender, queer, and able-bodied. I share this because transparency is important to me and I believe our lived experiences, our environment, and the body we inhabit impact the way we lead our lives. I hope this work, which is the beginning of something much larger, encourages you to be inquisitive, challenges your own privileges and preparedness in working with communities different than yours, and provides support and solidarity to you if you are a student experiencing ongoing marginalization and isolation. ¡Si se puede, si se pudo, y si se podrá!

¹ “the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another” (*Oxford Reference Online*, 2019).

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Introduction

Puerto Rico, in Spanish means “rich port.” It was given this name in 1493 when Spanish colonizers first landed on the archipelago-known then as Borikén - and were offered gold by the native Taínos. The colonizers quickly realized the material possession they could extract from the people and the land and a gold rush ensued (Denis, 2016, p. 12). A brutal history of 500 years of colonization followed and continues today.

This thesis focuses on the United States’ colonization of Puerto Rico (Bergmann, 1977; Denis, 2016). Nonetheless, it cannot be forgotten how the Spanish waged a ruthless genocide against the Taínos, captured and enslaved Africans, and physically abused, raped, and mutilated both Tainos and African slaves. When the Spanish landed in Borikén there were 50,000 Taínos living, but just 20 years later, only 3,000 were alive (Bergman, 1977). It is important to recognize that indigenous tribes in North America know this history all too well. As one reads this thesis remember the U.S. was also unforgiving in their genocide of Native Americans through efforts such as, the trail of tears led by President Andrew Jackson, and the U.S. continues their abuse as evidenced through the North Dakota Access Pipeline, among many others.

Five centuries have passed since Borikén was robbed of her autonomy by Spain. Genocide by the Spanish has been one of the many humanitarian abuses waged on Boricuas. While many may think or hope that the United States of America has been a ‘better’ colonizer; it has not. Brutality and the means of dehumanization and destruction have only evolved and advanced enough to mask the harm it continues to have in the forms of economic subjugation and laws and policies restricting self-determination (Denis, 2016; Gomez, 2018; Sheldon et al.,

2003). Parts of this history will be included in this research to demonstrate what colonization means for the colonized.

Despite such a long history of colonial abuse, Boricuas, and their ancestors, have continuously shown resilience. Examples of resilience and resistance will be incorporated throughout the thesis and will include present-day examples of Boricuas seeking to heal from the trauma of colonization by *decolonizing* their bodies and minds following Hurricane Maria. A case study of an action held in Boston on the one-year anniversary of the storm will describe how Boricuas in the diaspora sought forms of decolonization through the building of critical collective consciousness, reclaiming psychological and emotional rights to self-determination, and demanding political rights of self-determination for Puerto Rico.

Cultural rituals, used as part of collective healing practices by Boricuas, will demonstrate connections to the expressive arts therapy field. One specific ritual born of the fighting spirits of the ancestors of Puerto Rico, particularly from the African slaves, is Bomba (pronounced: boe-m-bah). Bomba will receive particular focus to exemplify its importance and relevance to dance therapy, especially after Boricuas experienced the devastating Hurricane Maria and the shock doctrines accompanying it.

Throughout this research, the reader can expect to reflect on the importance of cultural competence/humility as a clinician and individual, engage with the author's analysis of systems of oppression, and consider new approaches to supporting client empowerment through a liberation health framework.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed seeks to provide sociopolitical context to the experience of Boricuas on and off the archipelago. Sources include books about Puerto Rican history, liberation health, and theories about colonization. Articles about historical policies and practices

that have destabilized Puerto Rico and restricted the political self-determination of the island/archipelago are cited as well. Resources detailing the history and current usage of Bomba and other Afro-Caribbean movement rituals, and social justice in dance therapy are also included.

A humble advisement to the reader: some sections may be much harder to read and process due to the content. I have chosen to focus on the history of colonization in Puerto Rico first, because of how rarely it is incorporated in mainstream education. However, you may wish to jump ahead to learn of strength and resiliency and return to the history section afterwards. Trust yourself, listen to yourself. What affects you most? How do different sections make you feel? Invite discomfort as an opportunity for growth, but pace yourself as needed. Studying oppression can feel demoralizing and bring up histories of generational trauma. I encourage you to breathe through difficult parts and to take breaks when needed. Remember the folktale in the prologue and consider reading this thesis as a quest to find a seed of truth so that together we can set each other free.

History of Colonization in Puerto Rico by the United States of America

The deepest scars may be even harder to see. Colonialism itself is a social experiment, a multilayered system of explicit and implicit controls designed to strip colonized people of their culture, confidence, and power. With tools ranging from the brute military and police aggression used to put down strikes and rebellions, to a law that once banned the Puerto Rican flag, to the dictates handed down today by the unelected fiscal control board, residents of these islands have been living under that web of controls for centuries.

-Naomi Klein, *The Battle for Paradise*, 2018

The relationship between the United States (U.S.) and Puerto Rico (P.R.) mirrors a century-long relationship of abuse, even a domestic-violence partnership. *The Battle for*

Paradise (Klein, 2018) and *War Against All Puerto Ricans* (Denis, 2016) provide innumerable examples illustrating this relationship through its varied sources. Both books reveal dehumanizing, violating, terrorizing actions by the U.S. to the Puerto Rican archipelago and its people, the Boricuas. It is impossible to incorporate the full extent of abuse and oppression inflicted by the U.S. within the confines of this assignment. However, it is imperative to begin to unveil the truth behind this relationship in order to better understand the extent of the trauma as well as the needs for mental well-being among Boricuas, especially in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Early in *War Against All Puerto Ricans*, Denis (2016) describes the short-lived liberation Boricuas had when Spain granted P.R. autonomy vis-à-vis la Carta de Autonomía (Charter of Autonomy). This allowed P.R. to create its own constitution, legislature, tariffs, monetary system, treasury, judiciary, and international borders. Elections had been held, and the new government was scheduled for implementation in May of 1898. The people of Puerto Rico had already suffered 400 years of colonization by Spain (Denis, 2016; Rivera, 2018) and were on the brink of freedom and independence. Then the United States bombed San Juan on May 12, 1898 as part of the Spanish-American War (Denis, 2016, p. 13). Spain then ceded Puerto Rico, despite no longer having the legal right to do so as a result of the Charter of Autonomy (Arroyo-Montano & Arroyo Montano, 2017). That day the new colonizers proclaimed their objectives:

To give to the people of your beautiful island the largest measure of liberties consistent with military occupation...to bring you protection, to promote your prosperity, to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government...and to give the advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization. (Denis, 2016, p.16).

While the U.S. promised liberties, they actually pigeon-holed P.R. into a status (unincorporated territory) that neither promises them a path to statehood nor independence, and leaves Congress as the ultimate decision-makers of Puerto Rico's fate regardless of what Boricuas vote for (Rivera, 2018).

In *Hard to Sea Puerto Rico's Future* (2018), Rivera shares "incorporated territories are assured a path to statehood and enjoyment of the full force of the Constitution. On the other hand, unincorporated territories were not assured a path to statehood and, to this day, do not enjoy the focus of the Constitution; only those rights deemed 'fundamental' apply" (p.75). Additionally, as cited in the U.S. Constitution's Territorial Clause in Rivera (2018), two years after acquiring Puerto Rico, the U.S. passed the Foraker Act which granted Congress the power to "dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respective [to] the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States" (p. 74). "Property" is the key term here, because the acquisition of Puerto Rico has never been about the Boricuas, except when Boricuas can be used as cheap labor for U.S. corporate interests. Laws and policies have been passed over 120 years by the U.S. to continue subjugating Boricuas in order for the U.S. to profit the most off of Boricua land and resources; this will be explored and explained throughout this thesis. It is imperative to remember that subjugation through laws and policies trickle down to the people, resulting in their subjugation as well, and limit both political and individual self-determination.

Self-determination is implicit throughout this research, and for the reader, it is essential to know two types of self-determination. The first is self-determination theory, which is a psychological theory referring to the ways humans need self-determination to be able to feel motivated and be healthy. According to Sheldon et al. (2003), self-determination theory refers to "psychological forces or energies that impel a person toward a specific goal" (p. 42). The authors acknowledge three psychological needs that must be met to support an individual's health and

well-being, “autonomy (feeling volitional, and feeling choice and responsibility for their behavior), competence (feeling that they can accomplish the behaviors and reach the goal), and relatedness to others (feeling that they are understood and valued by significant others” (p. 41-42). In having these needs met, people can expect to feel more energetic, more connection to others in their lives, autonomous, competent, and motivated (Sheldon et al., 2003). Rivera (2018) demonstrates the second form of self-determination—political self-determination.

According to Ambassador Fred M. Zulman II as cited by Rivera (2018), "under international law and practice including the relevant U.N. resolutions and existing free association precedents, free association must be terminable at will by either party in order to establish that the relationship is consistent with separate sovereignty and the right of self-determination is preserved" (p. 77). However, while Puerto Rico is a free association, the archipelago has resulted in being an exception to this law. Since its acquisition as a U.S. unincorporated territory in 1898, Puerto Rico has not and continues not to have the right to terminate their relationship with the United States on their own, without the explicit approval of Congress (Rivera, 2018, 77-78).

Hurricane Maria is not the first storm to devastate Puerto Rico, and in some ways, the response and effects of this storm are an example of history repeating itself. A year just after the U.S. invaded and colonized Puerto Rico, Hurricane San Ciriaco struck the island. It was "one of the largest [hurricanes] in Caribbean history, destroyed thousands of Puerto Rican farms and nearly the entire 1898 coffee bean crop" (Denis, 2016, p. 29). Relief, however, was anything but. The U.S. took this opportunity to outlaw Puerto Rican currency, and devalue the peso by forty-percent. Through the Hollander Bill, farmers were then forced to mortgage their properties. Mortgages and interest rates were unregulated and caused most Boricuas, especially small farm landowners, to default within ten years (Denis, 2016, p.29). Additionally, U.S-appointed

governors set policies and practices that were self-serving, and which led to U.S. corporations owning eighty-percent of farmlands within ten years and ultimately to the first governor, Charles Herbert Allen, "acquiring an international sugar empire [Dominos Sugar]" (Denis, 2016. p.58). This is what many would call "disaster capitalism" and the "shock doctrine" (Klein, 2018). According to Klein, "central to a shock doctrine strategy is speed—pushing a flurry of radical changes through so quickly it's virtually impossible to keep up" (p. 45). Hurricane San Ciriaco was the first of many shock doctrines to hit the island and would continue to repeat itself throughout history, especially during and in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

In addition to historically violating Puerto Rican land for profit, Puerto Rican bodies were physically abused. When the eugenics wave hit the U.S., Boricuas were not off-limits. Seeing Boricuas as inferior, as "mongrels," and "savages," and with birth-rates declining in the U.S., the U.S. sponsored forced and often unknown sterilization of women in the mid-1940s (Denis, 2016). As Denis (2016) describes, pregnant women went to hospitals to give birth, and after leaving with their newborns they "didn't know, however, that her tubes had been cut, and that she would never have another baby" (Denis, 2016, p. 33). This vital part of history no doubt has continued to fuel and subliminally affect the perceptions of Boricuas in the U.S. today.

Unfortunately, there are additional examples of eugenics and medical experimentation on Boricuas. According to David Immerwhar on National Public Radio's Fresh Air episode, in the early 1930's Dr. Cornelius Rhoads, a member of the Rockefeller Institute, arrived in Puerto Rico and "he immediately started running all kinds of experiments that it's almost impossible to imagine him doing on the mainland - certainly not on white patients" (Davies, 2019). This included refusing to treat patients to see what would happen and spreading diseases (Davies, 2019). Rhoads would go on to inject Boricuas with liver cancer, write about it in a drunken stupor in 1931, and be praised for his work becoming chief of medicine in the Chemical

Weapons Division of the U.S. Army during World War II (Davies, 2019; Denis, 2016). In his own words he believed, “they [Puerto Ricans] are beyond the dirtiest, laziest, most degenerative, and thievish race of men ever to inhabit this sphere...what this island needs is not public health work, but a tidal wave or something to totally exterminate the entire population” (Denis, 2016, p. 35).

During his tenure as chief of the Chemical Weapons Division, he ran experiments on over 60,000 men, many of them were Puerto Rican, to test the effects of chemicals. Many had "mustard agents applied to their skin. They're put in gas chambers with gas masks just to see what happens" (Davies, 2018). Rhoads continued to be promoted and became head of the Sloan Kettering Institute, where he would become known as a forefather of chemotherapy. Rhoads was never tried for his abuses against the people of Puerto Rico (Davies, 2019; Denis, 2016).

The devaluing of Boricuas' lives by the federal government didn't change despite eugenics becoming less popular. Fortunately, Boricuas did know their lives mattered, and they demonstrated multigenerational resiliency throughout history. In 1908, schools became explicitly English-only, with punishments for speaking in Spanish, despite Boricuas only knowing Spanish. After continuously receiving bad grades from school, and punishments from their parents for the bad grades, children beautifully protested by refusing to attend school. As a result, Spanish returned to grammar schools by 1915 (Denis, 2016, p.19-23).

Resiliency also took place in the formation of nationalist groups, the first led by Pedro Albizu Campos in 1934. Nationalist efforts initially devoted themselves to public education, international advocacy, and a male youth branch known as the Cadets of the Republic. The cadets were trained in marching, self-defense, and survival skills (Denis, 2016, 38-39). They were modeled after the Easter Rising in Ireland and sought victory by “focus[ing] international

attention on the colonial status of Puerto Rico” (Denis, 2016, p. 39). A female component existed as well and was known as the Daughters of Freedom. They were trained as nurses.

Unsurprisingly, the U.S. viewed the nationalists as a threat, because they were pushing a movement for autonomy that contradicted U.S. interests. During a nationalist parade marking Palm Sunday with the community on March 21, 1937, unarmed attendees, including children, were blocked into a kill zone and shot (Denis, 2016, p. 45). A massacre occurred in Ponce that day-17 lives were lost and 200 others injured- but a different story would be told to those on the U.S. mainland; a story of Boricuas turning on themselves and killing each other. This incorporated the staging of photos “to show that the police were somehow ‘returning fire’ from Nationalists who were, at this point, already lying dead in the street” (Denis, 2016, p.49). Additionally, those who survived would later be incarcerated and charged with the deaths of their comrades, until the American Civil Liberties Union intervened.

Already, within 40 years of colonization by the United States, we have seen a Puerto Rico whose financial stability has been seized and destabilized. Farmers have been stripped of their lands while Governors of Puerto Rico and foreign investors eagerly acquired them creating their own empires. Profits off the land and the labor of the Boricuas have continued without the consent of Boricuas. Women have been sterilized, and people have been used as lab rats and died of unnecessary diseases. When resisting this abuse, massacres of unarmed civilians and activists have occurred. Colonization in Puerto Rico undeniably is a different name for abuse. Abuse has created the foundation for the relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S, and it persists today.

Flashing forward to the present, things may look different, and seem changed, but are they? Can an abusive relationship where the abused does not gain full power or autonomy over their well-being or body get ‘better’? Puerto Rico has gained the ability to vote for their governor

and one Congressional Representative who has no actual voting power in Congress. Boricuas on the island also gained the ability to vote in presidential primaries, but not in presidential elections. Boricuas are considered U.S. citizens, but only have the full privileges of citizenship when living in one of the 50 U.S. states. (Rivera, 2018; Denis, 2016; Resnick & Barclay, 2017).

P.R. is an unincorporated territory, but is labeled as a ‘commonwealth,’ what does that really mean? Commonwealth in Spanish is translated as ‘Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico,’ which literally means ‘Free Associated State of Puerto Rico’ in English. Additionally, there are many Commonwealths in the country which are in fact states (i.e., Commonwealth of Massachusetts/Pennsylvania/Virginia, etc.). One may wonder if the status of Puerto Rico is even clear to Boricuas, or whether it has been lost in translation.

In looking at the financial crisis of Puerto Rico, it can be clear that room for self-determination is not allowed. Between 2014-2017 when P.R. was defaulting on its debt, it tried to file for bankruptcy. The U.S. denied them this ability, which is a privilege all U.S. states have and would have allowed P.R. to at least restructure its own debt. Instead, the U.S. ruled that due to the status of P.R., it was not entitled to file for bankruptcy (Resnick & Barclay, 2017; Rodríguez-Díaz, 2018; Rivera, 2018). Not being able to file for bankruptcy then led to the creation of PROMESA (The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act) (Gomez, 2018; Resnick & Barclay, 2017; Rodríguez-Díaz, 2018; Rivera, 2018).

When PROMESA was passed, the federal government expected Boricuas to be thankful, because now creditors could not sue them. PROMESA entailed the creation of a board that would oversee the debt. The federal government decided that board members would be appointed by Congress and the President, instead of being elected by the people most affected. Austerity cuts, including a reduction of the minimum wage, took place reducing it to \$4.25/hour for workers under the age of 25, while taxes and the cost of bare essentials increased. Public

schools' budgets were cut, and many schools closed. Pensions were cut. PROMESA's privatization efforts threaten public parks and natural resources like el Yunque. The board of PROMESA has and can continue to choose whatever they wish to cut; they can choose however they wish to see Boricuas repay a debt, which research shows is questionably theirs to begin with. All while Boricuas have no legal recourse to hold the board accountable to their needs to survive, thrive, educate their children, etc. Meanwhile, the hedge funds that bet against Puerto Rico are earning over 700% in interest on the debt, a profit Boricuas have to pay—even if it costs them their lives² (H. R. 5278, 2016, Klein, 2018; Resnick & Barclay, 2017 & Rodríguez-Díaz, 2018).

Evidently, Hurricane Maria hit P.R. during an already tumultuous period. Unfortunately, the value of the lives and futures of Boricuas continues to be degraded, yet again, in favor of profits. The violent colonial relationship persists, but perhaps during the direst time of need for Puerto Rico and Boricuas. Soon after the devastation, the President of the U.S. applauded his administration's relief efforts; his throwing of paper towels to Boricuas at his press conference ("Trump Defends Throwing Paper Towels to Hurricane Survivors in Puerto Rico," 2017), comparing the impacts of Hurricane Maria's disaster as nothing compared to Hurricane Katrina ("Trump touts Puerto Rico response as 'fantastic' despite nearly 3,000 dead, and throwing paper towels at Boricuas days after the storm," 2018), while aid for food from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) barely reached those most in need ("FEMA contractor did not deliver millions of Puerto Rico meals: lawmakers," 2018), and while 79% of those seeking aid to reconstruct their homes were denied it ("FEMA has either denied or not approved most appeals for housing aid in Puerto Rico," 2018).

² Such structural adjustments have historically impoverished countries in South America and Greece (Martinussen, 1995).

The federal government has only acknowledged 66 deaths as a result of the hurricane, while a Harvard study has found the actual mortality as a result of the storm to be at least 4,645 deaths (Kishore et al., 2018). The publicly owned electric company is in the process of being privatized, and FEMA aid was largely unreceived and limited when it was needed most (Klein, 2019). Policies like the Jones Act literally strangled P.R. as they were unable to receive foreign aid immediately following the devastation, despite countries like Venezuela offering aid (Kishore et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Díaz, 2018; Rivera, 2018).

The Jones Act is a maritime law which allows Puerto Rico to import goods only by U.S. vessels with U.S. crewpersons, and be repaired only by other U.S. corporations (Rivera, 2018). This affects the people of Puerto Rico in devastating ways where the "Jones Act increases maritime transportation costs that are consequently passed down to the consumer" (Rivera, 2018, p. 97). As a result, the cost of basic food is much more expensive in Puerto Rico than most other parts of the country. Additionally, after Hurricane Maria hit, the Jones Act was the only law preventing other countries from sending aid to Puerto Rico. After much pressure, it was waived, but only for 10 days (Rivera 2018).

While it is impossible to incorporate every detail that illustrates the complexity of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, undeniably, there is one, and it is not a healthy one. In the case of Puerto Rico, the nature of the relationship is a political one. It is imperative to remember that these policies and practices were designed to affect people and have never failed to do so as emphasized by the shock doctrine and disaster capitalism after Hurricane Maria

It is essential to recognize that "there is no way to understand the post-Maria shock doctrine strategy without recognizing that Puerto Ricans 'were already in a state of shock and severe economic policies were already being applied here" (Klein, 2018, p. 50). This included

the closing of 340 schools, the shutting down of government entities going from 115 to just 30, laying off 17,000 public sector workers, among other austerity cuts, while corporations were and continue to receive predatory tax benefits leading to crypto-colonialism. Crypto-colonialism has manifested in cryptocurrency corporations making pitches and actively working on making Puerto Rico the “epicenter of this multi-trillion dollar market...the Hong Kong of the Caribbean” (Klein, 2018, p. 16). According to the pitch of these disaster capitalists, “you don’t have to relinquish your U.S. citizenship or even technically leave the United States to escape its tax laws and regulations, or the cold Wall Street winters” (Klein, 2018, p. 17).

Under a law passed in 2012 called Act 20, disaster capitalists benefit from not needing to pay taxes on their dividends in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican residents, however, "are not only excluded from these programs, but they also pay very high local taxes" (Klein, 2018, p. 19) and are currently being held responsible for paying 785% to 1000% in interest rates on the debt (p. 48). Disaster capitalists, do not have the interest of Boricuas in mind, as evidenced by their creation of gated communities, private schools, and interest in "buying a piece of land large enough to start their very own city—complete with airport, yacht port..." (p. 19-21). Conferences seeking to lure more investors into partaking in this plan took place with up to 1,000 participants, while Boricuas on the archipelago remained without power and access to basic-life saving resources.

The humanitarian crisis and the injustice towards Boricuas in Puerto Rico cannot be fully understood without understanding the ways racially, and socio-economically privileged groups manipulated a disastrous situation and sought individual and corporate profits instead of providing crucial aid and supporting the self-determination of Boricuas. As you read about the health crisis after Hurricane Maria, juxtapose the image of hedge-funders and corporations

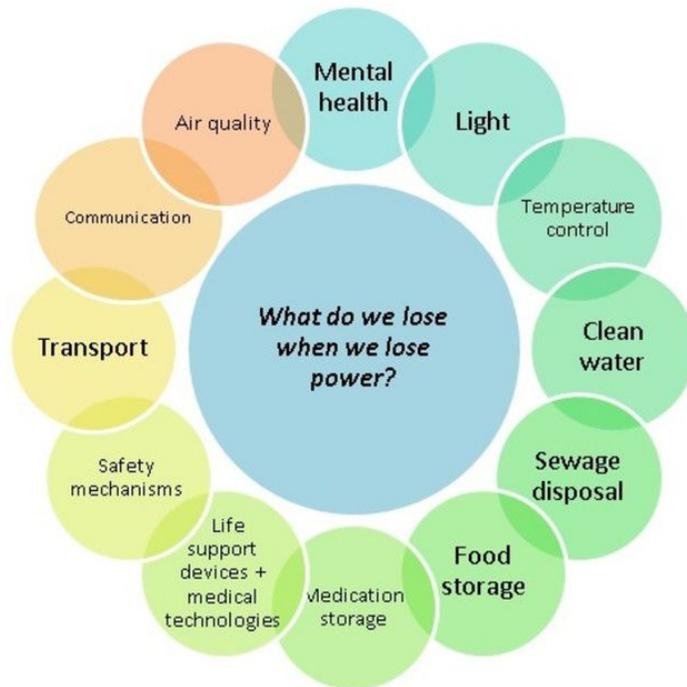
sitting comfortably in hotels in San Juan, taking yoga classes, drinking clean water, with luxurious roofs over their heads, while most of the island stayed literally in the dark.

Health Crisis after Hurricane Maria

A lack of systematic health and humanitarian disaster relief has led, predictably, to outbreaks of infectious disease (e.g., leptospirosis, scabies), limited access to clean water, and malnutrition, among other problems. The possible implementation of further austerity measures on Puerto Rico's government budget raises even more concerns about the availability of local resources to address the health care challenges posed by the public health. Moreover, the federal response to the emergency in Puerto Rico has been slow and limited. Poverty has the most significant impact in terms of health inequities after the hurricane and magnify the impact of social determinants of Puerto Ricans' health (e.g., housing, health care services, access to clean water and sanitation). Rodriguez-Diaz, 2018, p. 31.

A major humanitarian crisis arose after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico causing a rise in the physical, mental, and emotional needs of Boricuas. Life-sustaining resources such as clean running water and electricity were destroyed. Immediately, after Hurricane Maria, the entire electric grid failed, leading to some Boricuas not receiving power for eleven months (Robles, 2018).

Klinger, Landeg, and Murray (2014) studied the impacts electricity has on public health by reviewing a year of literature of significant events across the globe from 2011-2012. Their research found that power outages caused "difficulties of accessing healthcare, maintaining frontline services and the challenges of community healthcare" (p. 1). In figure 3 of their report, the researchers were able to conceptualize how much is lost when electricity vanishes, see below..

What do we lose when we lose power?

Klinger, Landeg, and Murray (2014)

The report exemplifies what happened in Puerto Rico in 2017. Resnick and Barclay (2017) report that “in Puerto Rico, as in any disaster situation, health hinges on electric power: Dialysis, refrigeration for insulin and other medicine, and nebulizers for people with asthma all need electricity to be useful. But it goes deeper than that: Electricity provides for the sanitation that prevents many illnesses like typhoid from spreading in the first place” (p.13).

In response to the public health crisis, the Bantiox Clinic was started in Toa Baja, Puerto Rico (Ramphal, 2018). The Bantiox Clinic focused on community members who were homeless or displaced and was visited by almost 5,000 patients in the first four months. The clinic recorded the reasons and outcomes for visits and found one of the most prevalent reasons was to receive adequate medication for pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and to treat respiratory and skin infections. The following figure demonstrates the physical conditions that were treated by the clinic:

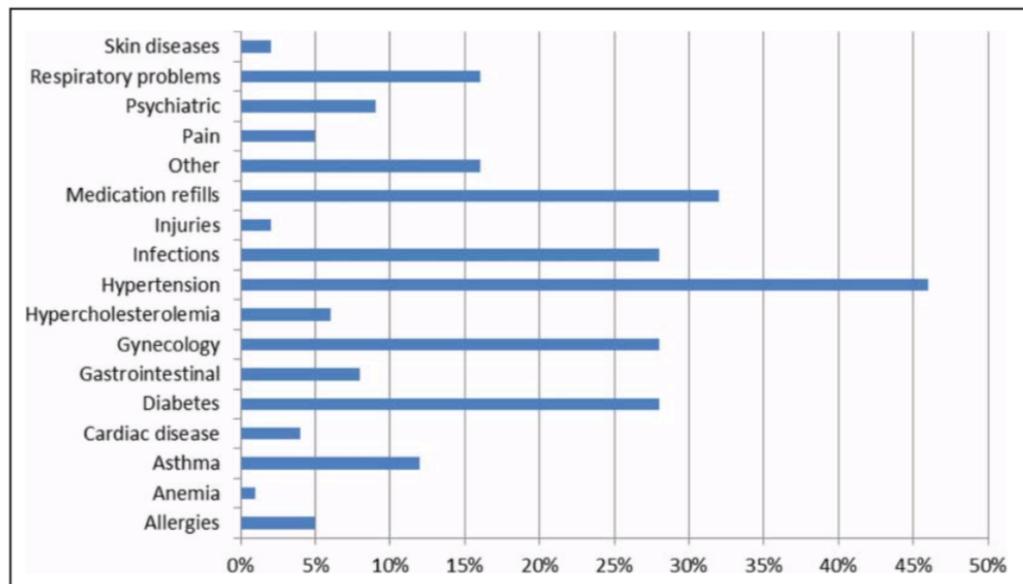


Figure 1. Diagnostic categories of patients seen at clinic visits.

Ramphal, 2018, p.295

Initially, the clinic had only prepared to treat physical illnesses. However, it soon became apparent that mental health was in crisis as well. Most patients expressed anxieties of another storm hitting and having food, housing, and transportation insecurity. Despite not having a formal screening process for mental health, the clinic was able to recruit a volunteer psychologist and four social workers. While the mental health providers were able to support many clients and

intervene in the mental health crisis, “three documented patient suicides occurred among two elderly patients and the daughter of one of these senior patients” (Ramphal, 2018, p. 295).

Suicide rose exponentially across the archipelago following Hurricane Maria. Suicide rates reached a point where on average one person was committing suicide per day (Perez 2018; Ramphal, 2018). According to Ramphal, “compared with 2016, the number of suicides in Puerto Rico was 16% higher 4 months after these hurricanes and 26% higher 6 months after Hurricane Maria...The insecurity of housing, food, and utilities after the hurricane has been shown to contribute to the rise in suicide” (Ramphal, 2018, p.296).

In a Newsweek report, Perez (2018) interviewed Alfredo Carrasquillo, a psychoanalyst and professor from San Juan, to discuss the suicide crisis in Puerto Rico. Carrasquillo shared that a contributing factor to suicidality has been a sense of helplessness, mainly because "Puerto Ricans have always felt that as a people when they are in a crisis, the American government will be there to help us. That has not happened. The response has been slow and terrible, and since [Hurricane Maria], we have felt alone and abandoned." Perez (2018) also reported that Hurricane Maria had caused other mental health issues including PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

Imagine not having food, electricity, and clean drinking water to survive. Imagine having infants and elders to care for. Most importantly, imagine expecting your federal government to come and literally save your life, or the lives of your family and community members, and then not show up. Boricuas have lived through that on top of 500 years of colonization. As a result, many now live with heightened depression, anxiety, and trauma. All have been reminded that they are second-class citizens who are not worthy of proper disaster relief. Additionally, their

lived experiences have been invalidated in the most grotesque manner—by the U.S. not acknowledging the loss of thousands of lives³.

Resilience and Protective Factors among Boricua Culture

Boricuas have proven time and time again to be incredibly resilient. In considering how to best support mental wellness and health for Boricuas, it is essential to understand cultural protective factors that have historically supported resilience and survivorship. While this section incorporates data from studies supporting psychological protective factors for Boricuas, it is important to remember that this information can create generalizations. With that in mind, I would like to remind readers that humans have multiple parts of their identities.

Complexities/intersectionality exist where a person can both be privileged and oppressed by their different identities. No one person experiences their same culture the same, just as no siblings experience their childhood the same. Therefore, the following research is indicative of general patterns within this population, which may inform a clinician who is not from this community, but should not be used to stereotype individuals or create expectations that these generalizations are true for all Latinos and Boricuas (Chang, 2016; Chang, 2016; Schultz, 2018).

One protective factor that has been found to be salient among Latinos is Familism. According to Campos et al. (2014), familism is defined as “a cultural value that emphasizes warm, close, supportive family relationships and that family be prioritized over self” (p. 191). Additionally, familism is learned “via behaviors that include living near, interacting frequently, and actively participating in networks of mutual assistance with family” (Campos et al., 2014, p. 198).

³. As previously stated, the federal government has acknowledged only 66 deaths while continuously praising their response. Various other studies including one from Harvard have estimated the death toll to be *at least* 4,645 (Kishore et al., 2018). Many of the deaths were found to have occurred when the hurricane hit and as a result of the complications from the aftermath of the hurricane and aid following three months after Maria hit (Kishore et al., 2018).

In separate research, Campos, Yim and Busse (2018), studied 86 participants⁴, to compare whether those identifying more with familism were more likely or not to have lower stress responses to a clinical stressor⁵. Familism was seen to be "a cultural factor that may shield Latinos from the wear-and-tear that repeated stress exposure can inflict on the body's stress-response system" (p. 304). For many Puerto Ricans and other Latino populations, familism is a shared value. Families live close to each other, and the definition of the nuclear family can even include grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. At times, familism may extend to community members who feel like family.

Another protective factor in mental health and well-being among Boricuas is ontological security. According to Hawkins and Maurer (2011), ontological security is "having confidence in the routine and reliability of persons, places, and things" (p.144) and having consistency and reliability of the "world existing the way it's 'supposed' to" (p. 144). Ontological security is present in many parts of one's life. Hawkins and Maurer describe how ontological security was affected following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. In this case as in Puerto Rico's after Hurricane Maria, ontological security was disturbed by displacement, death, famine, lack of water and electricity as well as the breaking of work and community routines such as religious services, and even changes in one's daily walks and the strangers they routinely encountered (Hawkins & Maurer, 2011).

⁴ Participants included 56 women and 30 men, average age 20, 51 self-identified as Latino, and 35 reported of Asian or European descent

⁵ Participants were given a 14 question survey, which measured "three subscales assessing the extent to which family obligation (e.g., "One should help economically with the support of younger brothers and sisters"), support from family (e.g., "When one has problems, one can count on the help of relatives"), and family as referents (e.g., "Much of what a son or daughter does should be done to please parents") are valued" (p. 299). The researchers incorporated testing of cortisol levels to demonstrate the impact laboratory stressors had on participants. Saliva samples were used for this purpose and were collected at the same times of day to discount any differences based on circadian rhythms. Multiple samples were taken at the same intervals during a 90-minute span. Evidence was found that supported the hypothesis that familism, which was found more within the Latino subgroup, served as a buffer to cortisol responses within the laboratory stressor.

These unremarkable moments of daily life, so easily taken for granted were replaced by deep scars left in the wake of the storm. Yet, as in New Orleans, people did not give up so easily. Community efforts supporting the rebuilding of ontological security included Centros de Apoyo Mutuo (Mutual Support Centers) and initiatives to provide consistent educational programming for children. Centros de Apoyo Mutuo were “autonomous, independent community support centers” (redapoyomutuo.org) across various neighborhoods that set up communal kitchens to cook and feed each other (redapoyomutuo.org); over fifteen centers are still in existence. They created a new sense of ontological security for many members in the community by providing safety, support, reliability, and fostering connection among neighbors. They are healing and empowering each other through their efforts, “CAM volunteers and leaders describe the experience as transformative, life-changing, empowering, healing and has inspired feelings of community strength, confidence, pride, dignity, and self-respect” (redapoyomuto.org).

Following the storm “many public schools were damaged or destroyed, disrupting the availability of free lunches and clean drinking water normally provided to all children” (Florence & Gonzalez-Lugo, 2018, p. 4). One foundation in San Juan, Fundación Casa Cortés, created a program to serve as a temporary school for children who attended public schools in that area. The program was called *Educa-Cortés: The Art of Wellness and Mental Health Program*, and it sought to provide therapy, education, and creative arts activities (Florence & Gonzalez-Lugo, 2018, p. 4). Through Educa-Cortés, children were provided a regular routine and programming that supported the exploration of their experiences and trauma from Hurricane Maria by using the arts for expression.

Dance Therapy and Liberation Health

It is clear that community and family are healing and sources of survivorship/resilience after a devastating natural disaster. Additionally, as Adrian Florido explores in a 2018 episode of

All Things Considered, so are cultural rituals. In the interview, local community members discuss how after Hurricane Maria hit, even when people were without electricity, running water, food, medicine, etc., they came to a community center to "ask if [Bomba] class would go on" (Florida, 2018). The director of the center, Maricruz Rivera Clemente, shares that "they'd suffered so much damage to their homes, Rivera says, but they still came, and that said a lot. The hurricane ripped holes in the center's roof, but Rivera resumed classes the following week. Sure, when it rained, they got wet. But in those days when so many people were fleeing the island, Rivera saw Bomba - culture, identity, that emotional connection - as among the few things that might convince people to stay" (Florida, 2018).

Bomba is a form of dance therapy that is rooted as a healing practice fostering communication, resistance, and resilience through movement (Herard-Marshall & Rivera 2019; Rivera, 2012). However, despite Bomba and many other Afro-Caribbean dances pre-dating the emergence of dance therapy, they have not been given proper credit by the dance therapy field and are only beginning to receive mention within the last few years (Herard-Marshall & Rivera 2019; Rivera, 2012).

Dance/movement therapy (DMT) is a mental health field that seeks to incorporate a psychotherapeutic approach with physical movement to "promote emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration of the individual" (ADTA.org). DMT has been extremely limited in including and crediting therapeutic movement styles and techniques from African descendants. It is necessary for dance/movement therapists to question why knowledge and praise of some movement styles/practices are more prevalent in the curriculum and field, while practices like Bomba are barely mentioned. The communities DMTs work with are as diverse as the United States, many are African descended and descendants from non-western parts of the world. Dance/movement therapists' commitment to serving historically marginalized communities in a

socially responsible and just manner requires knowledge in the field to be expanded beyond the white founders of this field⁶. Additionally, it is necessary to intentionally incorporate the histories and contributions of more diverse cultures into our curriculum and daily practices (Belkin Martinez & Fleck-Henderson, 2014). Supporting the liberation of our clients and ourselves requires this commitment. The following section will explore additional considerations for expanding the field by incorporating a liberation health model.

In *Social Justice in Clinical Practice* (2014), Belkin Martinez describes how a liberation health framework can be applied in therapy to address the symptoms of clients and the systemically oppressive environments that breed mental and physical illness. According to this model, it is essential as therapists to learn to better read the world and support clients in “reflecting critically on their experiences and knowledge; in order to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and myths about the world” and support ourselves and clients in seeing themselves as subjects who can “act upon the world” instead of objects who “are acted on by others” so that they may feel empowered to take action to change the circumstances affecting their lives (Belkin Martinez & Fleck-Henderson, 2014, p. 12).

Much of the liberation health model is based on the work of Paulo Freire and Ignacio Martin-Baro. Both were scholars and activists who worked in Latin America. In his work, Freire witnessed people feeling a “fatalistic attitude toward their lives and resigning themselves to their situation or ‘fate’ in society” (Belkin Martinez & Fleck-Henderson, 2014, p.10). Martin-Baro was a Jesuit priest and social psychologist who believed traditional theories of psychology “failed to recognize and address the nexus between psychological problems and structural injustice” (Belkin Martinez & Fleck-Henderson, 2014, p. 12).

⁶ Many of whom have been credited for techniques that are historically part of African dance (i.e. using a circle formation to support client attunement, mirroring, etc.)

The liberation health model grounds itself similarly to popular education, which Freire also developed. This framework focuses on acknowledging the lived experience of clients to build critical consciousness and uses an “environment/ecological model as a framework to identify the oppressive social conditions at the macro/cultural/institutional level that influence an individual’s personal problems” (Belkin Martinez & Fleck-Henderson, 2014, p. 13). Liberation health seeks to create interventions that support personal development “aimed at transforming patterns of internalized oppression and building strengths,” supports collective healing by “enabling individuals to work together in groups and communities,” and takes social and political action aimed at addressing the root causes of oppression in order to support the creation of change and social justice (Belkin Martinez & Fleck-Henderson, 2014, p. 14).

While looking at healthcare from this different perspective seeks to address root causes of oppression, so much potential lies untapped within exploring and preserving root causes of resilience and freedom, primarily through ancestral rituals and movement practices. If we consider ancestral dances as a form of DNA and embodied (sub)consciousness from the lived experience of our ancestors, it is imaginable that these practices have been built into our brains as protective mechanisms for the historical traumas we have endured. Though the appearance of the world has changed, the communities that were historically oppressed during the foundation of today’s nations, are still the same ones facing systemic oppression and marginalization. These communities are also the same groups continuing to find ways to survive and thrive. Consider this, what if our abilities to continue being resilient are supported by returning to our roots, learning our histories, and the therapeutic practices of our ancestors through dance/movement?

Community Action and Bomba

After Hurricane Maria, many Boricuas in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora have been reflecting on their lived experiences to understand the circumstances that created the

humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico. They have also been using their cultural practices for healing and working to build critical consciousness around the colonial history of the archipelago to fight for liberation. In doing so, these Boricuas have been actively partaking in a form of liberation health. I have had the privilege of witnessing, organizing, and partaking in these efforts and will share the insight it has given me.

September 20, 2018, marked the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria striking Puerto Rico. It was also the day over a hundred Boricuas in the Boston diaspora organized an action to commemorate the lives that perished and denounce the colonial abuse by the U.S. In a Baystate Banner article Vero Navarro shared "this event is a space to mourn, to heal and to hold each other, because although many lives have been lost, we're still here and we're still fighting," and Jasmine Gomez remarked "this disaster was not a natural disaster, this was a manmade disaster... This event is not just a reaction to the hurricane, but an acknowledgement of a history of oppression" (Mcglain, 2018). In response to the privatization of Puerto Rico's electric company and the possibility of roads, ports, water systems, and beaches also being privatized, Maritza Agrait shared, "that's all they use us for, is for our beaches, is for tourism" (Mcglain, 2018). The demands of the march were to repeal the Jones Act, repeal PROMESA and dissolve the Fiscal Control Board; to cancel the debt and pay reparations; to not privatize education or public resources, and to decolonize Puerto Rico (Torrejon Chu, personal communication, Oct. 2018).

Many of the action's organizers and attendees intentionally brought attention to the ongoing shock doctrine, or "the deliberate exploitation of states of emergency to push through a radical pro-corporate agenda" (Klein, 2018, p. 45). Many knew and felt that the existence of Boricuas in Puerto Rico was and continues to be threatened by ongoing colonization through structural adjustments, laws, and policies that continue to value corporate interests over the lives

of Boricuas. Marchers walked to the office of Seth Klarman from Baupost Group demanding that the debt be canceled. Klarman owns nearly one-billion dollars of the Puerto Rican debt (Dayen, 2017) and is known for disaster-capitalist investments-essentially becoming rich at the expense of oppressed peoples' suffering (Klein, 2018).

The action included papier-mâché angels that fluttered in blue and white, and a life-sized coffin made of papier-mâché and cardboard with the words “death toll tell the truth,” “cancel the debt,” and “4,645.” Six multigenerational volunteers of women, men, and non-gender conforming Boricuas carried the coffin throughout the march as the pallbearers⁷. Marchers were led by local Afro-Boricua musicians who adapted folkloric *Plena* songs (a musical style that followed after *Bomba*) to movement songs singing “mirala que linda viene, mirala que linda va, este movimiento nuestro, no se hecha para atras” (look at how beautiful it is coming, look at how beautiful it moves, this is our movement, and it’s not turning back). The coffin was laid to rest in front of the door to Baupost Group’s building and a moment of silence was held. Individuals laid messages on the coffin, and speakers then discussed the role of Seth Klarman and Baupost Group in the debt crisis and the role of the U.S. in Puerto Rico. Poetry was recited evoking resistance and perseverance from local poet and Afro-Boricua Yara Liceaga. Marchers then processed in a silent candle-lit vigil led by Fabiola Méndez, who is the first person to graduate from Berklee College of Music in 2018 with the Puerto Rican *cuatro*⁸ as her primary instrument.

As marchers got closer to their final destination, where there would be a healing space with *Bomba*, the music shifted. It became celebratory and prideful with many singing “yo soy Boricua, pa’que tu lo sepas” (I’m Boricua, just so you know!). When everyone arrived in the healing space warm food donated by volunteers awaited them, as well as the space for powerful

⁷ I share this detail, because organizers intentionally did not want to reinforce gender norms by just having men hold the coffin, and women and queer-identified Boricuas were at the forefront of leading this action.

⁸ The *cuatro* is the national instrument of Puerto Rico and resembles a guitar with a much smaller frame.

movement and voice expression through Bomba. Many danced, and with each movement the breath of the singers and dancers was present. Some community members sat, some stood in a circle, others could be seen changing into Bomba skirts to have a turn in the middle. Excitement and anxiousness could be felt as people talked to their friends about whether they should try. Ultimately, there was no judgement, and space was there for those who needed to have a spiritual release through movement, and for those who gained joy and unity by witnessing the expression. The night ended in community, in a spiritual gathering, with the understanding that we have each other, our trauma is valid, and together we can create change. The organizers of the one-year anniversary march intentionally incorporated many cultural practices because we felt the most influential tool for resistance was our culture. Bomba was specially incorporated for this reason and for its historical relevance in building resilience since it began in Puerto Rico.

Bomba began as a way to provide social connection, and a means to disguise revolts in the 16th century (Cartagena, 2004; Cromwell, Du-Graf, and Lyons (2018); Rivera, 2012). The etymology of bomba reveals its roots in the Akan language and to the Bantu of Africa which are based in modern-day Congo, Angola, Mozambique, and Cameroon (Cartagena, 2004).

According to Cartagena (2004), the word ‘bomba’ has a “spiritual connotation for a gathering” in the Bantu language (p. 17).

Bomba “is a musical art form from Puerto Rico that combines drumming, dancing, and song in a celebration of dexterity and synergy between the drummer and dancer” (Cartagena, 2004, p. 17). Bomba consists of two drums, the first is a *buleador/tambor segundo*, which is the drum that keeps the rhythm, the second is the *subidor/primo/tambor primero*, which seeks to create a rhythmic pattern based on the dancer’s movements. The drums come from the African descendants who started Bomba. Other instruments such as the *cua* and maracas are indicative of Taíno influences and connections forged between Taínos and Africans who fled to the mountains

(Bergmann, 1977). The exchange between the subidor and dancer are one of the most important parts according to Cartagena (2004) "whether the dancer is present or imagined, without a dancer, there is no real bomba" (p. 17). This clear non-verbal exchange between dancer and drummer ebbs and flows between competitive and playful dialogue.

According to Cromwell, Du-Graf, and Lyons (2018), presently Bomba is as relevant to Boricuas as ever:

Some may even call bomba the soundtrack of Puerto Rican resistance. At this year's May Day march in San Juan its lyrics and drumbeats echoed through the crowds airing their opposition to austerity measures, including school closures and university tuition hikes, before police fired pepper spray and tear gas to end the protest. (Cromwell, Du-Graf, & Lyons, 2018, p. 4)

In addition to being a source for political power and overall empowerment in public action, Bomba has enormous potential for ongoing healing in dance therapy sessions with groups and individual clients.

Recently, Herard-Marshall and Rivera (2019) have begun to open the dance therapy field to the strength of Afro-Caribbean dance in healing generational trauma, fostering resilience, and supporting clients' self-liberation. In breaking down Afro-Caribbean dance to four overarching categories, they demonstrate the therapeutic and structural similarities that exist among the distinct Afro-Caribbean dances; this includes Bomba.

According to Herard-Marshall and Rivera (2019), Afro-Caribbean dances include symbolic imagery through "the embodiment of forces of nature, themes of struggle, revolution, liberation, pride, and celebration" (p. 2). They also include collective power, which is developed by having a circle formation and incorporating call and response and polyrhythmic structures that "emphasize that all elements relate to each other"(p.2). Elements of collective power create

a safe container and teach values of "cooperation, community, respect for the elders, respect to traditions, and identity" (p.2). Thirdly, Afro-Caribbean dance traditions emerged out of the need to fight for liberation with elements of socio-political power threaded in these dances which continue to be used for similar purposes "by engaging in a cultural revolution aimed at ethnic unity, social resistance, claiming power, and fighting oppression"(p.2). Lastly, Afro-Caribbean dances support an energetic connection to individual's spiritual power, "it is the drive behind creation, inspiration, transformation, resistance against illness...its narrative has helped clients cope with pain, life challenges, and connect with their own resilient self" (p.2).

So how can we use Bomba in dance therapy? Hopefully, you are asking yourself, for who and by whom? Bomba comes from an Afro-Boricua background, which has been denigrated historically by white society, including lighter skinned-Boricuas who wanted to distinguish themselves from their blackness (an inherited ideology of white-supremacy from Spanish and United States colonization). In Cromwell, Du-Graf, and Lyons, 2018, Juan Cepeda remembers a time when Afro-Puerto Rican music wasn't so popular, and Bomba was dressed up differently to appeal to white audiences, "they put two white dancers on the cover of the album" (p.4). White-identified society has historically remarked that Bomba is "vulgar," "filthy," "grotesque" or described it as "the delicious dance of Bomba, performed in the untilled and filthy wilderness by naked men and women in banana leaves, and Bomba drums that produce sounds like cannon shots" (Cartagena, 2004, p. 21). Cartagena (2004) describes in 2003, after National Geographic covered Bomba in a profile of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican Congressional Representative complained the magazine focused on "extremely limited examples of our culture to the near total exclusion of traditions much more representative of the general Puerto Rican society" (p. 21), a clear example of internalized oppression and rejection of African ancestry.

Bomba is not for people, not even for Boricuas who wish to wash away our connection to our African ancestry. Bomba belongs to Boricuas who acknowledge and embrace this ancestry, and these Boricuas come in all shapes, colors, textures of hair, etc., because we are a mixed racial group. It is not meant to become an element of dance therapy that is taught in predominantly white groups. As a sacred and ancestral art form, steeped in both the oppression and resilience of the Puerto Rican people, it is meant to be taught with the highest level of responsibility and accountability to and by therapists who can hold that responsibility. It is required that Bomba be recognized for its beauty and power as it currently exists within Afro-Boricua culture. Implications for the use and development of Bomba as a therapeutic tool and framework in dance therapy ought to be created collectively among dance/movement therapists who are familiar with these practices and connected to Boricuas in their communities.

Therapists of racial and socio-economic privilege can be allies by providing support in the expansion of this field to these therapists/researchers. Support should include physical resources that can finance the ongoing research of Bomba (physical dancing space for group sessions, grants for research, and money to travel and practice in the native-lands that these styles originate from). It is crucial that dance therapists and the American Dance Therapy Association expand, support, and embrace cultural inclusion and the healing process that is inherent in Bomba, and other African descended dance/movement practices. It is vital for all dance therapists to also protect Bomba from cultural appropriation (Oxford, 2019), which would result in the commercialization of Bomba by mostly white, socioeconomically privileged individuals; essentially robbing it from Boricuas who have paid the price to keep it alive through centuries of subjugation.

Conclusion

For Boricuas reeling from the pain and generational trauma of colonization, slavery, racism, and imperialism, Bomba can be a return to our roots of resistance and support our efforts to decolonize our bodies. It can be a way of reclaiming or continuing to claim our African heritage, and the resilience within it. Bomba rituals and Afro-Caribbean dance is rooted in liberation and serves as an example of the liberation health model in practice. As a result of Bomba's revolutionary and emancipatory qualities, Boricuas on the archipelago and in the diaspora, such as Boston, have been using Bomba to cope with the ongoing trauma of colonialism, disaster capitalism, and multiple shock doctrines. These systems and tactics of oppression are robbing Puerto Rico from Puerto Ricans in order to benefit wealthy investors who only have profits in mind.

The information in this thesis is not new, but if it does feel new, it is important to question why. Where should you have learned this, and why haven't you been taught this? Then consider that Boricuas have also not been taught this history; *their* history—another example of how the U.S. has robbed Boricuas of self-determination. This goes beyond a coincidence and is a consequence of colonialism and the belief that history is told by the victor. We know there are many sides to every story and it is time to seek knowledge from non-dominant narratives.

Additionally, while there has been mention of intersectionality among Boricuas and their experiences with privilege and oppression, the scope of this thesis has not been able to capture it more fully. Future areas of research may include Boricua DMTs and Afro-Caribbean DMTs working together to research intersectionality in our communities, its connection to internalized oppression, and factors that could support empowerment and unity building.

Moving forward, it is vital for clinicians seeking to promote liberation and empowerment among our clients to be explicitly pro Afro-Latinx, pro-black, and pro-liberation. Additionally, it is crucial to be equipped to support Boricua clients and other clients who have experienced

historical colonization and imperialism. Support may be improved by researching historical psychological factors that have supported survivorship and resilience, such as familism, and strong ontological security rooted in community.

The history of colonization has been and continues to be deplorable, but if we apply a liberation health model to our practice, we can become clinicians with critical consciousness, who are active in taking action in our world—shaping it, and not being acted upon by it. Our responsibility lies in committing to that ongoing process, supporting our clients in that process, and realizing that social action to create change is part of our responsibilities. Ignoring this responsibility devalues the ongoing worldwide struggles communities of color, and other marginalized backgrounds face on a daily basis, thus making one an inactive bystander, and therefore an accomplice to the systems of oppression.

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In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

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