

# PUERTO RICO

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## **Secundaria Montessori de Puerto Rico**

Presentation before Delegates of the Montessori Model of the UNITED NATIONS

At Closure on Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Buenos Días a todos los Delegados aquí presentes. Good morning to all the Delegates who are here before us. My name is Lara González Soler and I am from Puerto Rico, a beautiful tropical nation strategically located in the Caribbean. Our people are proud and have defended our culture for centuries and we plan to embrace new pathways to social and economic reform. We have been historically colonized by Spain and now the United States. The UNITED NATIONS considers us as part of the United States even though we are not a state. We are very proud of our country and all of us feel a strong patriotism towards our land. Our islands are populated by over 4 million people and historically, during the middle of the last century, due to economic challenges, many puertorricans moved to the United States. Now there are more than 4 million puertorricans who live here in the United States and yet still feel very patriotic to our country even though our third and fourth generations cannot speak the Spanish language.

In representation of the Secundaria Montessori of Puerto Rico, I am here before you to give a bit of our history for you to consider our claim for the power to control our future social and economic structure.

When we were invaded by Spain at our frontiers in the south of our island on November 19, 1493, our homeland was organized in communal indigenous tribes called TAINOS. We respected our land... - for its nature and land provided us with fruits, vegetables and natural river water which guaranteed a healthy environment for all of us. In spite of our challenging attempts to defend ourselves, the Spaniards conquered our people with guns and plagues of illness. They converted us from our primitive yet well-developed society into slavery and feudalism. The Spaniards changed our name from ***Borique*** to ***San Juan Bautista*** and centuries later, influenced by the United States, it was changed to ***Porto Rico***. The reason it was changed was due to the fact that we were the richest port in the Caribbean. Why were we the richest port? It was because that was where they shipped gold from Mexico and Puerto Rico as well as other products to take back to Spain. They shipped our gold in their boats, returning to our island with rock blocks to pave roads and facilitate easy access to the ports they needed to transport our valuable resources to their country in Europe.

During the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century our agriculture was developed and we produced sugar and coffee beans considered food treasures for exportation to Europe and later to the United States. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century our sugar was valued at \$150.00 US dollars per pound within the United States. The United States was extremely interested in taking control of the major Caribbean Islands as well as South America. This vision was principally applied for two reasons – production resources for their population

to guarantee economic profit plus to dominate the lands around their country to protect the United States. And yet, after all these hardships, we still maintain our beautiful culture, and we are committed to defend it. We are a very patriotic people, we are proud of our heritage and we defend our traditions with great conviction.

In 1868 we attempted to organize a revolutionary uprising to gain our independence from Spain. To our misfortune, one of our companions confessed to a Catholic Priest in the church that we were organizing militarily for a revolutionary uprising to declare our independence. Unfortunately, the Priest informed Spain of these plans and we had to anticipate the date to September 23, 1868. Spain consequently responded by organizing militarily and thus we were unsuccessful in our intent to overthrow Spain and declare our independence.

Meanwhile, the United States had established a discreet economic relationship with our agricultural farmers and continued to export our products to their nation.

In 1897 we were able to negotiate with Spain our autonomy. Months later however, in 1898, after an American ship exploded off the coast of Cuba, the United States accused Spain for that military aggression forcing a negotiation and taking control over our nation eliminating our autonomy.

Once the United States took over our nation, slowly but surely they converted us from an agricultural society to one of the principal triangular military bases including Alaska and the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States took complete control over our economy forcing us to become entirely dependent. By destroying our agriculture, we are now forced to import over 85% of food on their ships. We are not allowed to receive imported goods from any Caribbean, Latin-American or other international countries due to the fact that no other country is permitted to ship merchandise to our island. Consequently, everything we purchase comes from the United States.

The United States attempted to change our language from Spanish to English in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century however, the organized **Nationalist Party** resisted and because of our united patriotism to defend and protect our heritage, we were able to maintain our native language. We are very grateful for their sacrifice to defend our country.

When the First World War began, the Congress of the United States allowed us to become American citizens so that we could be recruited to the United States Army. Many puertorricans refused to enter into the Army and were imprisoned. In the 1970's resistance to the Army in the United States and Puerto Rico became very active, consequently, forced recruitment was adjusted and imprisonment was eliminated.

In the 1960's and 70's, petrochemical plants were developed on our land producing large income for international corporations, but not for our nation. In the 1980's they were shut down and new international pharmaceutical plants were established. We became and are one of the principle producers of medical products. The employees are being paid wages and annual bonuses yet our country Puerto Rico, has not received any profit from the extraordinary international sales of these products.

There is much more history about our country, but it is more important to resolve our dependent colonial situation with a reconstruction of a new social and economic status. We must protect our land to guarantee a secure future for the generations to come. We love our country and understand the importance of protecting the earth we live on. We must gain control of our future to benefit our people and establish new international relationships in favor of all humanity with respect towards Mother Nature. We must not be enslaved with economic hardships. We must create a new international society extending our resources and interchange products with other nations to benefit all human beings.

Le agradecemos a todos los Delegados presentes por escuchar nuestra historia y apreciamos su consideración por ver una nueva visión para cambiar nuestro mundo.

We thank all the present Delegates for learning about our history and appreciate your consideration for a new vision to change our world.

***Thank You. Muchas Gracias.***