La Biblioteca
A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events

Episode 6: Environmental Activism in Vieques Island, Puerto Rico

From the Library of Congress, in Washington D.C.

Dr. Marie Cruz Soto: Basically, there were slums created with people who slept under the stars for a long time. It created a humanitarian crisis.

Myrna Pagan: You’ve heard the story before, but we were living it. This island lived it. And, it is still in the memory of this community.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: In today’s episode, we are welcoming Bianca Napoleoni, a fall 2020 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities intern.

Herman Luis Chavez: She is the author of “On Language and Colony,” a story map that explores the linguistic trajectory of Puerto Rico through a colonial lens.

Bianca Napoleoni: Hola, and welcome to La Biblioteca, an exploration of the Library of Congress collections that focus on the cultures of Spain, Portugal, Latin America, and the Hispanic community in the United States. I’m Bianca Napoleoni. Season two of La Biblioteca focuses on “A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States,” a research guide which has been curated here at the Library of Congress. This is our sixth and final episode, which discusses environmental activism on Vieques Island. It has been 21 years since two F-18 jets missed their bombing target and accidentally killed David Sanes Rodriguez, a Puerto Rican security guard and local of Vieques Island. The death of Sanes unleashed global headlines, amassed local, national, and international protests, and exposed the navy’s 60-years occupation of Vieques Island. Vieques Island is a small Puerto Rican municipality, and, like its mainland, Viequenses are United States citizens eligible to vote for their local government but ineligible for representation in Congress nor allowed to vote for the president during the general elections. For decades, Vieques was used as a military training range, where thousands of bombs and missiles were fired—all while locals resided a few miles away. Sanes’s death rekindled public denunciation of Naval presence in Vieques. Activists and prominent figures performed acts of civil disobedience, setting camps outside bombing ranges and halting military exercises for a year. In San Juan, thousands of demonstrators took the cause to the streets, demanding environmental justice. These protests led to the permanent shutdown of Vieques’s Naval Base in 2003. The former naval base is now a national wildlife refuge. Today, Viequenses face economic and health repercussions stemming from former military operations and exacerbated by Hurricane Maria. Vieques currently suffers from high levels of radiation, toxic remains of heavy metals—including lead, nickel, and magnesium—and higher cancer rates among Viequenses in comparison to Puerto Ricans living in the mainland. Few economic
opportunities and lack of hospitals in Vieques have also worsened the situation. As a result, thousands of Viequenses are exiting their beloved island.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Today, we welcome Dr. Marie Cruz Soto. Marie Cruz Soto teaches at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University, and writes about how imperial/colonial interventions in Vieques have created a vulnerable and unruly population. In addition, Cruz Soto is a peace activist who has participated in Vieques-centered initiatives and transnational networks of solidarity against militarism.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Hi Dr. Cruz Soto, welcome to the Biblioteca.

Marie Cruz Soto: Hello everyone, hello Lupita and Herman, and I'm very glad to be here.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: We would love to start off by knowing more about Vieques Island, which is part of Puerto Rico. Could you tell us where exactly the island is located and the characteristics of the island?

Marie Cruz Soto: It's it's usually known as an island, but Puerto Rico is actually an archipelago, and it has a main island and it has two island municipalities, which are Culebra and Vieques. So Vieques is an island municipality of the Puerto Rican archipelago. Vieques is located to the east of the Puerto Rican main island. They are very close. From Vieques, you can see the Eastern coast of Puerto Rican main island.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: When we think about Puerto Rico, some, including myself, may have not imagined that the archipelago also includes the island of Vieques, located away from the mainland, with its own history, and challenges. We would like to shift our focus to the naval occupation of Vieques. When was Vieques Island occupied by the navy and what was the navy's justification or purpose for occupying Vieques Island?

Marie Cruz Soto: It happened through two expropriation waves. It started in early 1941, when the Congress and Puerto Rican politicians approved the establishment of a navy base. And the justification for the base was basically U.S. participation in World War Two. When Congress approved the navy's entrance into Vieques, it happened in 1941, and Pearl Harbor had not happened yet, so the expropriations that were carried out in Vieques to give the navy control of over three-fourths of the island happened before the U.S. officially entered World War Two, even though the justification for it was basically the campaign lead in World War Two. And within that war effort, the U.S. and the British were concerned that Germany posed a threat to an area that was strategically important to them and for different reasons, but I'll mention just two. The Caribbean was important for both empires in terms of the flow of oil and the flow of commerce and in this, there are different sites across the Caribbean that were important for both in terms of Venezuela, different islands of the lesser Antilles, and obviously the Panama Canal. And, also the U.S. when they started construction in the base, they were thinking that they could transfer the British Royal Navy to Vieques, and have it be there. That didn't turn out to be needed, but that was part of the justification also for establishing a base in Vieques.
Maria Guadalupe Partida: 1941 was the year when the navy began to expropriate three-fourths of Vieques' land. What was the population of Vieques prior to 1941?

Marie Cruz Soto: in the 1940s, the population of the island was 10,362 people.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: As we begin to delve into the 1999 Vieques Protests, we must also consider what happened to the Viequenses living on the island while navy forces began arriving. The Library of Congress possesses a 1941 digital photograph captured by Jack Delano, where children from 25 families, whose land had been taken over by the navy, are living in tents. Could you bring context to this image and tell us more about the Viequenses that were living in the island before the occupation of the navy? What happened to them?

Marie Cruz Soto: Spain in Vieques created the conditions for a sugar colony. And then the US came in in 1898 and basically cultivated, the same thing. It kept Vieques as a sugar colony. And I mentioned this, because there was an elite that controlled the sugar industry, controlled most of the land and reaped the rewards of the sugar extraction production. And the majority—the overwhelming majority of the population of the island—were basically poor wage-earners that were working the sugar fields or were in jobs that were somehow related to the sugar industry, so that was a situation in the 1930s before the navy came in. So why did the navy find when they came in? A very vulnerable community of poor people of color having colonial US citizenship, with no representation in Congress, no representation in Washington, so the navy negotiated the expropriation process with a handful of landowners and then the rest of the people were deemed by the navy to be squatters, even though they had all sorts of rights under Puerto Rican law. What the navy did was basically take control of three-fourths of the island, and part of what they did with that land that they acquired, they established a firing range to the East. In the middle, they created basically a land strip meant to be used by civilians but next to that land stripped was navy-owned land, where they put the expropriados as they're known here, as they're known in Spanish, right the people that were expropriated. There is documentation that show that navy officials saw them as dirty poor, having no rights. Many of them were literally dumped like trash in navy owned tracts of land that had no infrastructure for human habitation. And they said well if you are not willing to just leave the island, we will give you where to live, but this is navy-owned land and you can be evicted without much prior notice and that's what it is. As anyone can imagine, basically there were slums created with people who slept under the stars for a long time. It created a humanitarian crisis that the navy then proclaimed to be had no responsibility over said well that's not our problem that's a problem of the government of Puerto Rico, of the colonial government based in San Juan.

Herman Luis Chavez: The naval base shut down in 2003. Can you talk a little bit about what led to this eventual shut down, coming out of this context that you’ve mentioned for us here?

Dr. Marie Cruz Soto: Basically, from the start, with the entrance of the navy, there were protests. And the navy left because of people protesting, right, and a really intense solidarity movement that led to that. And people protested basically from the 1940s. They based their protests on
different things for different arguments like we need jobs, we need to be able to make a living, we're hungry. And eventually they organized and throughout the years, there came to be seasoned community activist with different points throughout the decades of the military occupation did different things, and some of the most well known moments, where, for example in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when there was a civil disobedience movement with fisherman defying navy policies that they cannot be in the waters at any given time and putting their boats in the middle, so that the navy couldn't practice, the navy and its allies couldn't practice in the island and that was accompanied by people doing civil disobedience on land too. So, that happens in the late 1970s and early 1980s. People over, I would say, starting in the 1980s also start articulating environmental concerns about the navy's presence in the island and they mobilize for that, too, and then in 1999 there was a death of this civilian guard Sanes that sparked eventually the civil disobedience movement that made President Bush order the navy out of the island by 2003. That was you know the navy left the island, because of the labor of people within the island that have been working for it for many decades, and it also responded to the intense solidarity that people within the Puerto Rican main island also showed and people across the world within the US and throughout Latin America and throughout the world, including other spaces other places that have been similarly militarized, have experienced colonialism like Vieques in, for example in Okinawa, in Guam, and other spaces.

Herman Luis Chavez: That that is so important, I think it's really, really important that you're mentioning this solidarity here, and I would love to hear a little bit about the repercussions that occurred to the island municipality after the navy left and maybe how there was still this response from the Viequenses to the environmental consequences of the land.

Dr. Marie Cruz Soto: So, as you mentioned there's the environmental devastation. Vieques is a really beautiful island and it may seem to people who come here, now that it wasn't affected, but basically because part of the most damage by the navy's presence is not seen to the naked eye and then the places are really damaged that can be seen, are not allowed visitors are not allowed right, so we can't see the areas most impacted by the navy's presence. So there's environmental devastation that lingers and there's a whole process of the cleanup process is again another struggle that people in Vieques have been waging of trying to get the navy to do an adequate cleanup, and that is another big struggle for that to happen. Another consequence of the navy, well there's a health crisis in the island. There are all sorts of statistics that are quite troubling in terms of the numbers of the people affected by chronic diseases, by cancer, by cardiovascular disease in the island, especially when compared to the main island, so the numbers here are way higher. And that is another struggle, because people here have also been asking for reparations and saying that there is evidence to show that, indeed, the navy practices impacted human health and the navy has been basically saying no and the federal government has also agreed that there is no scientific evidence and then that there is no grounds for reparations. So there's a health crisis that's going on within this very poor community that actually has no hospital right now, because since hurricane Maria, well it had a clinic and even that right now it's not working. So people were actually after Maria also going to their clinic to their hospital, which were just basically tents. Other legacies of the navy's presence, there is obviously the property, the
widespread poverty in the island, and the navy left a very vulnerable and poor population that is right now suffering from different again health crisis poverty. There's also gentrification. It has been happening post 2003 with people moving in, buying land, and displacing the local population that has become the cheap labor force for new commerce. So that is a legacy of the navy, but I would also say that a legacy of the navy’s presence has been the breathing of a particular kind of anti colonial unriliness among islanders that have learned to just not do as they're told, to be able to critique. And they've also become—they've learned—but they've also become a model for other places around the world.

Herman Luis Chavez: Thank you for sharing with us, Dr. Cruz Soto. Is there anything else that you would like to mention or highlight for us regarding the situation in Vieques?

Dr. Marie Cruz Soto: There has been an attempt to make the navy again going back to the language of reparations, but to assume responsibility for the damage it cost in the island right and a lawsuit in place asking for reparations asking for the navy to say well you know take responsibility and so, if you take responsibility and think about reparations you need to do things like be able to you know, help the community establish a hospital, right.

Herman Luis Chavez: Thank you so much, Dr. Soto. Now, we are joined by Myrna Pagan, a protector of the environment, an artist-activist dedicated to the defense of peace, justice, and equality. The will to make a difference with an open heart and compassion has inspired decades of activism in Vieques and taken her to places around the globe to share the story of her beloved, brave community. As the mother of five and abuela of nine she is committed to the development and empowerment of the younger generations on this journey of healing and transformation of our world so that they can play an active role in creating a good life for all. Welcome to Biblioteca! Myrna, we would love to start off by hearing a little bit about your background. How long have you lived in Vieques, and how long have you been a part of that community?

Myrna Pagan: Oh, my dear. My background starts in the 1940s when my family was part of the diaspora of that time. We left San Juan for New York City, and after many moves we settled in the Bronx. My parents, well they struggle, then succeeded in giving us a good education and dignified life. The family focus at that time was on assimilation, and I was blissfully ignorant of the political upheaval, the economic crisis, and the social chaos in Borinquen. That awakening came when the family moved back to Puerto Rico. And at that time, back in San Juan, I met Charlie Connelly, an Irishman from Connecticut who had trained as a marine for Korea in Vieques and his dream was to live on that paradise island. Well, the universe conspired, as they say, and we fell in love, we married, and we set sail for the fishing village of Esperanza. We settled there to raise a family, and that was 55 years ago. So, we settled here in Esperanza, and our mantra was to become an integral part of the community, which was the gift of a lifetime. And how were we to contribute to this, our new family? Well, fortunately, we stayed on, we learned, we became much wiser by being here. Like in 1979, I became a founding member of the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust. And as the first President, succeeded in having the beautiful, magnificent, wondrous, bioluminescent, bay of Vieques, having it designated as a
Herman Luis Chavez: It is so lovely to hear about how you came to Vieques and about your story. I think it’s so important, how you mentioned that you and your family wanted to make this concerted effort to be a part of the community. And I think that that speaks to you know your involvement, you know, since then, with some of the important advocacy and activist efforts that have come out of the the work that you have done. I would love to pinpoint what your community in Vieques was going through during the navy's occupation. Can you tell us a little bit about what you and Vieques were experiencing at that time?

Myrna Pagan: Well, I will commence with the fact that the military, for six decades, was bombing Vieques in maneuvers and a trillion pounds of explosives fell on this tiny island. The presence of the military was overwhelming. The sailors and marines, they arrived by thousands for military maneuvers. They overran the tiny island. Often, causing mayhem and violent outbreaks with the men, sexual assaults on the women, and theft from the merchants. The military would intimidate the complaining islanders to drop charges. The land expropriations were traumatizing the families. Families were displaced and the psychological effects were especially harmful to the children. This is not a new story. You've heard this story before, but we were living it. This island lived it, and it is still in the memory of this community. Because the level of anxiety affected everybody with fear for their safety on disguise for the planes and bombs exploding during the maneuvers. There was anger and sorrow in being collateral damage to the war games. And, contrary to popular belief, the navy did not provide employment, since their base was on Ceiba, which is on a different island. And that was used as their headquarters. Vieques was for bombing and maneuvers, for the testing of weapons, conventional and non conventional weapons, and experimenting with napalm, agent orange, and even depleted uranium. Well, our protests were ignored for decades. And then came the fateful day in 1999 when the navy dropped an iron bomb that hit its observation post and killed David Sanes, a Vieques civilian.

It is 1999, that fateful day and there exploded the horror of decades of suffering and abuse. And the people rose, invaded the impact area, offering themselves as human shields to stop the bombing. It was basta ya ninguna bomba mas, and thousands of supporters came from Puerto Rico, the big island, from the diaspora, and from all corners actually all corners of the globe. People came and joined us in esta lucha. Para el cese del bombardero, to stop the bombing on the island. Well, el pueblo forced the navy to stop the bombing and close Camp Garcia. And President Bush spoke at that time, saying these words: these are our friends and neighbors, and they don't want us there. And then, he closed the base. Well, we had succeeded in changing the biggest most powerful military that the world has known. Without one bullet being
shot, we were a peaceful movement, but we were passionate in our lucha. And well we overcame and I must say, as they admitted themselves, they were not good neighbors.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: The death of Sanes, which rekindled public denunciation against naval occupation in 1999 set forth a wave of activism and solidarity not only within Puerto Rico but throughout the world, a lucha that to date has not retreated. Ms. Pagan, you are an activist and the president of Vidas Viequenses Valen. Could you tell us more about your activism within this organization? What is the vision and purpose of Vidas Viequenses Valen?

Myrna Pagan: Vidas Viequenses Valen is a grassroots movement. We gather together for this purpose and formally, officially, we advocate publicly for the environmental and health issues, carrying the voice of our people from the homeland, into national, and international venues. After six decades of bombing, Vieques is one of the most contaminated places on earth. This has resulted in the highest rates of cancer in Puerto Rico. And the health situation is compromised across the board, higher rates of diabetes, asthma heart, problems kidney failure, cirrhosis of the liver. Well, as a superfund site a clean up site of priority, we are at this time undergoing cleanup and hopefully restoration of our lands. We must oversee this monumental endeavor and ensuring that the military does its job to remediate the harm done on two thirds of our land and all of our people. So, we advocate for the use of the finest available technology and honest use of the millions of dollars in contracts to heal our defiled paradise. We are also, I am an active member of The navy restoration Advisory Board. It's an instrument for the community and the navy to update on what's happening out in the cleanup, how's the progress now how, how are we being protected in the process. We are committed to informing and empowering the community with knowledge of navy activities.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: It is so uplifting to hear about your active role in Vidas Viequences Valen as well as your involvement in other committees affiliated with the wellbeing and recovery of Vieques. The island is not only facing the consequences of past naval occupation, but also the trials and tribulations brought forth by Hurricane Maria in 2017 and the COVID-19 pandemic. Could you tell us more on how Vieques has been affected by Covid-19 and Maria?

Myrna Pagan: Vieques was decimated by Hurricane Maria. This was September 2017. After grappling with an emergency situation for decades, we are still in recovery, which translates to number one. There still is no hospital to attend this underserved isolated community, with no access to medical services beyond emergency stabilization. Part of that situation, the toxics has been something that we've concentrated on greatly because as processing the cleanup of the superfund site, the navy practices open burning and open detonation of the bombs that are being recovered that did not explode the first time they were thrown on the island to the island. We have been fighting for detonation chambers, where they would not fire these bombs on these explosions and set all these toxics off into the environment, and instead and close them in a chamber. They built these chambers are available, and now we have the money to get one. The navy recently announced that the installation of our first chamber. Our first Chamber should be installed and running within six to eight months. And after decades of marches and protests, the toxic damage will be somewhat abated. The navy anticipates the cleanup to run for many
more years, 10 more years cleaning surface cleaning the land and 20 more years to attack the underwater explosives that still remain on our shore.

We have lost almost 1000 residents from Vieques. Those who remain are disproportionately older and poorer. And ironically, the best paying jobs are in munitions cleanup, decommissioning the bombs left by the navy. The pandemic has truncated tourism and business opportunities. And, the only factory which we have, which employed about 100 workers has shut down. Vieques is vulnerable to the forces of speculation and gentrification and displacement of the population. The young require more opportunities for higher education, for a job, for good health care. And as I say, many have left.

We have discovered the strengths and talents necessary to carry on. And, even to dream again about building a new Vieques, where natives can prosper and thrive. The younger generation is turning to agriculture and fishing as a sustainable and necessary means of improving the health and provide an income for them. The spirit of these survivors and their commitment to protect and defend their island home is cause for celebration. Never to abandon the paradise they love.

Herman Luis Chavez: Wow okay so, those were two very impactful interviews that we just listened to. I would love us to start with you Bianca. Can you tell us about the Puerto Rican experience with Vieques?

Bianca Napoleoni: Of course, thank you, Herman. So, my name is Bianca Napoleoni. I've lived in Puerto Rico all of my life. I'm currently 27, and I have completed my degrees in Puerto Rico as well, so I'm born and raised here. This specific episode made me realize that even though this is a very much known event in the island, I was not aware of how deep it went or even the fact that it went on for decades. It’s truly sad that it took the death of a person in Vieques for everyone else on the mainland to kind of realize—and also globally—realize what was happening on the island of Vieques. Here in the mainland, we consider Vieques like a forgotten island or Los Olvidados. So, one of the things that struck me the most on listening to Dr. Cruz Soto and Myrna Pagan interviews was the fact that this as a Puerto Rican myself is not delved into as it should be—either in education, in schools, or just as a societal conversation among Puerto Ricans in the mainland. When Myrna Pagan was talking about the repercussions in the health of Viequenses, it filled me with sorrow, because the fact that these people are part of our island, and they are going through a lot, not only with what the repercussions of this event, Maria, COVID, and all you see in the news regarding Viequenses is either that a new hotel has opened up or or a new airbnb or either that people are dying, that they don't have food that there are no hospitals, that the ferry is closed, so there’s just a very, very clear juxtaposition position there where Vieques is amazing, come visit us, it's like paradise, but then people living there are going through, unemployment, lack of resources, and poverty. And, to be frank, people in the mainland like myself, my family, people in Puerto Rico also kind of forget that they are part of the mainland, our island. So, it’s very powerful to hear what the interviewers were speaking about what was going on to people in our island because we keep forgetting that they are part of Puerto Rico, that they are part of our island as well.
Herman Luis Chavez: This concept of Los Olvidados is so interesting and impactful to me. It reminds me of an interview that we did for another episode of this podcast with Dr. Carlos Manuel Haro at UCLA who told us that if we don't remember our history, we lose our history. I think that's so impactful that even in Puerto Rico, which is just like so close to Vieques, and Vieques is part of Puerto Rico too, there's already this aspect of that history of the environmental and health and physical and all these impacts that came from the situation of Vieques Island are not necessarily a part of the wider you know Puerto Rican history. And, as you mentioned here just now Bianca, this awareness that you know there's this lack of education on the island and lack of basic needs on the island that have come out of this history with Vieques, but how are we supposed to know why Vieques is the way it is now if we don't understand the historical impacts of events like the military occupation.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: That's a great point Herman. In order to understand why Vieques is one of the most contaminated places on Earth, with alarming rates of cancer, diabetes, and asthma in comparison to Puerto Rico's mainland, we must be exposed to the past, engage in dialogue, and attempt to find solutions that address the current environmental and health crisis in the region. Not only is Vieques suffering from a health crisis, but there are also high levels of gentrification and lack of opportunities that have encouraged the younger generations to leave the island. All this could be attributed back to the health crisis, Hurricane Maria, and Covid-19. I also believe that it's crucial and inspiring to know about Vieques' activists, including Myrna Pagan, and their role in uplifting this community and amplifying the voices that have been forgotten. They help us understand Vieques' current situation.

Herman Luis Chavez: You know what you are mentioning now Lupita about you know, we have to understand what the Viequenses are experiencing today, I think that to me remind me of how different each of the issues that we have explored throughout this podcast season is, but how you know it's all affecting the issues that the Latino/Latinx community is undergoing. And to me, that means that you know when we talk about the Latinos of the US, then we have to make sure we're including everyone, we have to make sure that that is an acknowledgement of everyone from the Viequenses in Puerto Rico all the way to the small communities of Latinos that exists in Maine, right. I think that we have to understand that these issues of Latinx civil rights are really broad in the way that they affect the community, but I think it's important for us to you know when we talk about activism for Latino, or when we talk about changing policies or advocating, calling our Congress members, it's not only you know one Latino community that that we should be keeping in mind, but rather the fact that there are communities of all different types of experiences, you know especially the Viequenses as you mentioned one of the most contaminated places on earth.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: I agree, Herman, and that brings up the point of there being a solidarity movement involving Vieques against its naval occupation. Vieques became a solidarity movement that gained international headlines. There were protesters that came to Vieques from across the globe, because they also felt that they were part of this movement to make change. This ultimately led to the shutdown of Vieques in 2003, a goal after decades of naval occupation. And, I think what you bring up is an important point, there must be solidarity
within the Latino/Latinx Community. In order to move forward as a community, one must be integrated, one must do their part, and I think being aware of other community's histories and advocating for the wellbeing of all is a form of being in solidarity with not only another groups' past but a group’s present.

Bianca Napoleoni: I agree, Lupita, and just hearing you speak about solidarity movements, but also the powerful or the power that people hold when they want to evoke change and how activism and protest, riots, whatever it may be, pacific demonstrations, how you can really evoke change as small as it may be. And the Vieques protest is just one small example of all the other events you guys have explore and shared. But it's just amazing to hear the narrative that Myrna Pagan shared and how people were used as human shields, how the fisherman were blocking the navy boats, and just how again what you were mentioning about everyone joining in for the cause, protesting, and how they really did evoke the change that was needed for a long time.

Herman Luis Chavez: I honestly feel like this is our own little call to action. Over the course of this podcast, we've asked each of our interviews at the end you know what is, what is your call to action to your community to The Library of Congress' audience. And, I think that after going through this process, it feels like you know we're getting to this place where we recognize that our call to action is to accept that you know activism and advocacy has to come from all these different places and encompass all these different communities, even when a term has brought us, you know Latino is the one that's used to to encompass them. I would encourage myself even but you know, anyone who has really taken the time to listen to our podcast to really consider you know what it would mean to take that next step and embrace holistic advocacy for the Latinx community. I think it would be great to hear from both of you as well. What would be your call to action?

Bianca Napoleoni: What comes to mind is knowledge is power and as an education major I've always taught that to my students, and I think my call to action right now is to speak about these events, share this amazing podcast with my students with my peers, with my colleagues, share all of the resources that are not only available at the LOC. But just for me, right now, my call to action is just to bring these conversations into place, specifically with the younger generation of Puerto Rico who are maybe are not aware of not only these events, but the gravity of these situations. What about you, Lupita? Does anything come to mind?

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Powerful words. Thank you Bianca. Throughout my time at the Library, I've had the privilege of doing research on all these cases and events in relation to the Latinx community, one that has now reached 60 million individuals and one that keeps on growing. I realized that I didn't grow up learning about people like Jovita Idar, who was born and raised in the same city as I. After extensive research and collection curation on the Latinx community, my identity has been strengthened and I have been empowered by all the stories that may not appear in the K-12 education system. My call to action today is to delve into the history of your community in order to find your identity, and become empowered.
Herman Luis Chavez: Thank you to those who have been listening to us over this podcast season. It has been a really impactful process for us to go through this together, and I think we really do hope that those who are listening take what we’re saying to heart. As we finish this podcast season, I want our listeners to know that they can find additional resources and Library materials on our Latinx Civil Rights resource page. Regarding this episode, you’ll be able to find a Congressional Research Report on navy training activity in Vieques and Viequense narratives about the island’s activities, among other resources. Bianca you’re in Puerto Rico. And Lupita is in Texas. I’ve been in LA and in Colorado during this time. And yet, we’ve still producing this work and working closely with one another. I feel very proud and honored to have known you both and to have shared this experience. It’s also like what I would give to go have like cute lunches out in DC together.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: An actual Cafecito.

Herman Luis Chavez: I know.

Bianca Napoleoni: But, it’s been fun you guys.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: I agree it has been an amazing experience.

Bianca Napoleoni: Happy Hispanic Heritage Month 2021! Thank you for tuning in to La Biblioteca, Season 2. I’m Bianca Napoleoni. For more information on the Latinx community and civil rights, visit us online at guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights. Hasta pronto!

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