

## プエルトリコの新しい社会と女性：自立する女性たちの記録

志 柿 禎 子

### A Modern Historical Perspective of Puerto Rican Women : Puerto Rican Women Movement beyond the Region Politics<sup>i</sup>

Yoshiko SHIGAKI

プエルトリコ (Puerto Rico) では1929年に、読み書き能力があることという制限つきであったものの、初めて女性の参政権が認められた。これは、1929年にラテンアメリカ・カリブ地域の中で最も早く女性参政権が成立したエクアドルに次いで2番目に早く、世界的にみてもかなり早い時期に女性参政権が成立している。1975年メキシコで開催された第一回女性世界会議以降も、女性たちを取り巻く状況は大きく前進し、70年代以降、家族法の改正、教育の場における男女差別の解消、セクハラ禁止法、ドメスティック・バイオレンスを犯罪とする法律成立など、女性の状況は大きく改善された。これらの法律が制定されていく過程では、政党の運動とは別に形成されていた女性運動からの政府、行政側への働きかけが極めて重要な役割を果たしている。この課題解決に当たっては、多くの女性組織が思想の違いを超えて、また、以前から女性運動の障害として指摘されていた党派主義の問題を乗り越えて連帯してこの課題に取り組み、成果をあげた。現在も数多くの女性団体が活発な活動を続けている。

#### **Prolog Women in Society Influenced by the US**

Puerto Rico is a sub-tropical island situated on the east edge of Great Antilles which consists of the islands Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The Atlantic Ocean is to the north, and the Caribbean Sea is to the south. It has an area of 8896 square kilometers, 180 kilometers from east to west and 60 kilometers from north to south. The population is approximately 3 and half million people. Meanwhile 2,730,000 Puerto Ricans live on the US mainland with 1,100,000 Puerto Ricans living in New York.

Puerto Ricans are mixed blooded people of Caribbean Indian, Spanish and African descent. We, as visitors, meet various people whose color and appearance are different. They keep their culture, both Spanish and Caribbean traditions. As well as speaking Spanish, the majority are Catholic. After the war between Spain and America in 1898, Puerto Rico became part of the US territory. Then in 1917

the US government granted citizenship to the Puerto Ricans. After some legal proceedings, Puerto Rico was granted the political status, of Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. With this political situation it's important to understand the influence of the US on Puerto Rican culture, as well as on the culture of the Spanish and the Caribbean. The people are always discussing the political status in the newspaper and in the media because it's the most important polemic in this society. But for Puerto Ricans, getting on an airplane to the US mainland is like getting on a public bus. We can now recognize Puerto Rico's special situation with the US, compared to other Latin American countries.

And it's a characteristic of Puerto Rican women's history that the Puerto Rican women's social position has changed drastically entering the 20th century in connection to the US society. At the same time, it means that there has been a risk of being involved in the debate about political status when the women are tackling sex discrimination in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican women always have had this conflict. We can say that Puerto Rican women's social position has been established based on Puerto Rican society on the one hand and the influence of being a part of US society on the other.

## I. Social Change in the Puerto Rican Women's Historical Context and the Change of Women's Social Position

### Tradition and Women

Before the arrival of the Spanish, the Taino tribe was living in Puerto Rico hunting, fishing and cultivating tobacco, chili and cassava etc. The Spanish confirmed that some Taino tribes had women chiefs, but we don't know whether they held power equal to that of male chiefs. Furthermore, according to specialists we know that within tribal society cultivation was developed by women and women assisted in holy festival that involved ball-game ceremony. Therefore women represented important members in society. But this society disappeared rapidly after the arrival of the Spanish.

Christopher Columbus arrived in Puerto Rico in 1493 during his second voyage to the Americas. In 1508 the first colony was constructed in Puerto Rico and they started mining and farming using native labor. They also started to produce sugar. However many Natives died because of this slave labor and epidemics. The survivors fled to other islands and then the island's native population decreased rapidly. After the year 1510, the Spanish started to use slaves of African origin making up for the lack of native labor. But in the 1530's the minerals were almost exhausted and news about Pizarro's conquest of the Inca Empire spread to the island. Many colonists didn't stop, but went to Peru or Mexico and the population of colony continued decreasing.

In the 17th century Holland and Britain started to attack the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean by hiring pirates. To avoid these pirates' attacks, the Spanish started a new system. They gathered together in Havana and then sailed in fleets to Spain and other destinations. For this reason, most ships stopped coming to Puerto Rico, so the economy became stagnant and the population kept declining. As a result, the total population of the island was less than ten thousand in 1700.

For these reasons, only a small number of Spanish

soldiers and poor white farmers lived in Puerto Rico for a long time, although the Spanish had colonized the island from a very early date. But entering the 18th century the War of the Spanish Succession in Europe had finished. Then Spain started to take an interest in the economic activities in the Americas again. When the British occupied Havana in Cuba in 1760, Spain paid attention to Puerto Rico and started to produce cane sugar for commercial trade. People started to migrate to Puerto Rico and the importation of slaves of African origin increased rapidly.

In the 19th century, Latin American countries gained independence one after another and ultimately only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained Spanish colonies in the Caribbean. As a result of losing the colonies, Spain reconstituted colonial policy regarding Puerto Rico and attempted to animate the economy, an area where Spain had paid little attention before. Spain freed the trade with foreign countries, constructed the port and increased the sugar production. Immigration increased and the class of small plantation proprietors was formed. As the result, the population of the islands swelled to one million at the end of the 19th century from 160 thousand at the beginning of the 19th century.

The women's norm before the industrialized era was that women had had their place at home in the plantation system. Their world was at home and to be homely was a virtue of women. Furthermore, idleness meant proof of wealth and was a mark of ladies of high society. Through these influences the standards of Spanish high society were passed into Puerto Rican society, which emerged at the end of 19th century. It's difficult to find source material about these women before the 19th century, although we know about some women, for example, woman who immigrated to Puerto Rico from Spain having to feed their family without a husband; or a slave woman who bought her own freedom through extra labor. Furthermore feminism spread among the masses of women after the latter half of 19th century and 20th century. Therefore we have to focus on the modern historical perspective when we discuss Puerto Rican women.

Also the suffragettes that emerged in the world in the 19th and 20th century are important when discussing feminism. Puerto Rican women gained suffrage early and female education was also widespread early. These are prominent features among Latin American countries and we have to pay

attention to these.

### **The Spread of Female Education**

Relating to female education in 19th century in Puerto Rico, a famous example of equal opportunity in education between sexes was the establishment of a school for girls by Ms. Celestina Cordero. Also in the latter half of 19th century, the Committee of Ladies of Honor of the Economical Society of Friends of country (Junta de Damas de Honor de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País) or the Association of Ladies for the Instruction of Women (Asociación de Damas para la instrucción de la Mujer), these organizations endeavored to improve female education. But it was only after the 20th century that the greater mass of women had come to be able to have an education. After 1900, the US authority started the policy that would spread public education and attempted to substantially improve the education system. With this policy, many children received education and the opportunity of getting education for women increased drastically. The number of women who could receive education was few in the 19th century but it peaked sharply in the 20th century. In 1903 the University of Puerto Rico was founded as a teacher training college and 74% of graduates from 1903 to 1923 were women." Many of them worked as teachers or nurses bearing the burden of improvement in education and public health on the island. Among these women, suffragist leaders emerged. Also we want to point out that women educated in the US become suffragist leaders.

The above-mentioned phenomenon indicates that the US educational policy was responsible for the diffusion of a public education system on the island and this caused the spread of female education that brought about a foundation of feminism. Today the rate of women in higher education is very high, 159 females per 100 men. The early start and spread of female mass education is responsible for the current large number of powerful professional women playing an active part in Puerto Rican society.

### **The Struggle for Woman Suffrage**

From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th, the suffrage movement flourished in Puerto Rico also. In 1929 women who could read and write were enfranchised

and in 1935 all adult women were enfranchised. It's the second earliest in Latin American and the Caribbean area, following Ecuador where woman suffrage was established in 1929. This is quite early when compared to other countries.

In this process two important powers supported the suffrage movement. One was the feminist power of professional and upper class women who demanded the equal opportunity of education and woman suffrage. The other one was feminism of working class women. It's noteworthy that the women emancipation's power emerged from the labor movement that peaked in the beginning of the 20th century in Puerto Rico and joined the suffrage movement. The effect was an increase in the momentum of the suffrage movement. The Labor movement put up women's emancipation as one of its important social reforms. Because the labor unions couldn't exist excluding women. There were many female workers in Puerto Rico in the textile and tobacco industries that were the main national industries at that time.

In Puerto Rico in the latter half of the 19th century, the economical connection with the US became closer and after becoming a territory of the US in 1899, US capital increased the industrialization of the tobacco and sugar industries. As well, the textile industry expanded on the island with US capital that preferred the island's cheap labor. So many women were employed in the island's main industries, the Puerto Rican labor unions needed to organize female labor.

In 1898 the Regional Federation of Workers (Federación Regional de Trabajadores), first organization with the character of a labor union, was founded. The next year they changed its name to Liberty Federation of Workers (Federación Libre de Trabajadores) and restarted. This organization tried to organize and educate female workers actively to prevent the wage level of all workers from falling because of the low wages of female workers. The union made woman suffrage one of its demands as early as its fifth conference in 1908. This was first important claim of right to vote for women in Puerto Rico. In 1915, the Socialist Party was founded as the political section of this union and this party became the first party that demanded woman suffrage. This party expanded their power in the 1920s when the right to vote for women was argued actively. In the 1930s the party was able to push forward the suffrage movement from its position as one of the ruling parties in the

coalition government.

As mentioned above, the labor movement's history involved the women's history and the labor movement supported the suffrage movement. The suffragists were assisting the conference of women laborers or women laborers became members of woman suffrage associations. The suffragists and women laborers were solidly supporting the right to vote for women movement. The suffrage movement had been flourishing with the increase of women laborers, the emergence of women activists in the labor movement, the expansion of women intellectuals and the activities of suffragists.

In 1917 Puerto Ricans were given US civil rights by the Jones Act. (An Act to provide a civil government for Puerto Rico and for other purposes). When US women were enfranchised in 1920, the hope that Puerto Rican women would also be able to have the right to vote arose from the Puerto Rican suffrage movement, because Puerto Rico was a US territory. In 1920 Genara Pagan as representative of Liberty Federation of Workers sued Local Board of Inscription (Junta Local de Inscripciones) demanding the right to vote but she lost the case. In 1924, Milagros Benet who was a member of the Suffragist Social League (Liga Social Sufragista) and the president of the Women's Pan-American Association (Asociación Pan-Americana de Mujeres) also sued the Board of Inscription. This case was also lost, but the cases were meaningful in revealing legal sex discrimination. After these cases Puerto Rican suffrage groups went to the US looking for support of their suffrage cause. The Suffragist Social League (P.R.) affiliated with the National Woman's Party (Partido Nacional de Mujeres, US) and the Association of Puerto Rican Women Suffragists (Asociación Puertorriqueña de Mujeres Sufragistas, P.R.) affiliated with the National Association of Women Voters (Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Votantes, US). They started to lobby for the US Congress. As a result of their lobbying, the US Congress proposed an amendment to a bill. But finally, at the request of US appointed Governor Towner, the legislative assembly of Puerto Rico recognized the right to vote for literate women to avoid the appearance of US government control of the suffrage issue in Puerto Rican politics. All women were enfranchised in 1935 at the intense demand of the labor movement. However after gaining the right to vote,

the suffrage movement lost momentum and became stagnant. The activities of the female labor activists were also reduced with the closing of tobacco and textile factories due to the depression of 1930s.

Nevertheless outstanding women emerged from this suffrage movement, and they became harbingers of feminism in Puerto Rico. Many women left their names in history, for example, women who belonged to the working class played an active part as leaders in the labor movement then joined the suffrage movement. Upper class women who received education in the US played an active part in the suffrage movement as leaders. Among intellectual women, Ana Roque the famous leader of the suffrage movement, published many texts as a teacher in the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th, and published the first magazines and newspapers for women in Puerto Rico. From the labor movement, Luisa Capetillo, who was the first woman to wear pants claimed women's rights in the labor movement and published her thinking, was outstanding.

## II. Industrialization and Women

### Women and Society after Achieving Suffrage

After the granting of woman suffrage, we had to wait until the 1970s for the next wave of lively feminism. This new energetic feminism didn't appear suddenly, but emerged as result of a steady increase in women's participation in society after obtaining woman suffrage.

Women who started to enter the labor market in the 20th century have changed their social role with the social transformation to a industrialized and consumer society. Some people saw this change as part of Americanization. This antipathy toward Americanization became linked to negative feelings toward changes in women's social roles. It's certain that Puerto Rican industrialization was influenced strongly by U.S. society. In the period of depression in the 1930s, the U.S. economic policy of public enterprise expansion was applied to Puerto Rico. In the 1940s, industrialization policy was started to reduce the tax rate to attract U.S. capital to Puerto Rico. With this system the Puerto Rican society industrialized rapidly and this caused increasing employment.

The Island's Relation to the US has had a Profound Impact

on the Political Rights of Women in Puerto Rico

During the Second World War many Puerto Ricans did military service and this gave them preference for federal employment when they retired and scholarship for university study. This resulted in pushing the island's modernization forward. Also in the 1940s, a Puerto Rican community formed on the US mainland, so new aspect was added to Puerto Rican history. These transformations brought about women's role changes in the society.

In 1948, the first Puerto Rican governor was chosen by popular election. The government started a new industrialization policy and national economic growth increased rapidly. It was a time of rapid economic growth in the 1950s when the advance of industrialization caused rapid urbanization in Puerto Rico. After the 1960s, urban housing, car society and consumer society appeared. The consciousness of urban women changed. Women were being educated more highly, women's opportunities for economic independence were increasing, and they started to work as professionals and also started to work in the political area. This transformation of female roles in the society converted the women's identity from being associated only with the home to being a producer. This new female role and identity didn't match the old role that was assigned to women in Spanish traditional culture. These transformations caused the fight against sex discrimination that was led by professional women in the 1960s. The protest resulted in the Civil Rights Commission in Puerto Rico starting to investigate the situation of sex discrimination in 1969. This was an important factor that caused the new feminism of the 1970s.

### **Feminism after the 1970s**

A new feminism in the US known as "Women's Lib" spread through the mass media in Puerto Rico. In 1971 the Association of Puerto Rican Women Journalists invited Gloria Steinem, a founder and editor of magazine *Ms.*, to visit. The Puerto Rican mass media paid attention to her, and the next year the Puerto Rican government announced the results of an investigation into women's situation researched by the Committee of Civil Rights. The investigation concluded that sexual discrimination is not a serious problem in Puerto Rico. This conclusion caused tremendous disagreement. From this debate the first "second wave" feminist

group, MIA (*Mujer Intégrate Ahora*), emerged. This group prompted the assembly to establish the new family laws actively. This stimulated the political parties to make political platforms about sex discrimination. The Democratic Popular Party promised the establishment of a department of women in their election campaign and after their victory, they made the Commission for the Improvement of Women's Rights (*comisión para el mejoramiento de los derechos de la mujer*). This Commission researched sex discrimination in education, domestic violence, and they were successful in taking measures to deal with sexual harassment. In 1977 a women's conference was held in Puerto Rico in response to the first world conference on women in Mexico City in 1975. So the appearance of new feminism in the country and the international atmosphere regarding women's affairs forced the government to respond to women's issues. In this 1970s women's studies emerged. In the 1980s, centers or departments for women's studies were being established at universities. Women's studies and education about sex discrimination were promoted.

In 1973 abortion became legal. In 1976 the family law that prescribed possession of property by a couple etc. was amended. In 1988 a law was passed that prohibited sexual harassment, and in the 1989 a law that stated that domestic violence was criminal, was established. Puerto Rican feminists played an important role in these improvements in women's social status.

With this rise of feminism, many women's organizations were established in the 70s and the 80s. One group, established in 1979, and originally in the feminist movement strove to help women understand their bodies with their own eyes. This group works nowadays more widely; instructing about health, AIDS, and teenage pregnancy, etc. They have been doing good work receiving governmental support. The Protected House of Julia de Burgos (*Casa Protegida Julia de Burgos*) that opened in 1980 as the first shelter for women victims violated by men in Puerto Rico, was commended for their achievement and the scale of their governmental support was enlarged also. Now they are protecting women victims at a shelter in cooperating with the police and helping the women to reconstruct their lives with the program of counseling and getting jobs. Other volunteer organizations followed their example. As well, many other kinds of

women's organizations were established; for example, the Feminist Forward March (Feminista en Marcha) in 1983, the Puerto Rican Organization of Woman Workers (Organización Puertorriqueña de la mujer trabajadora) in 1982, the Women's Center of the University of Puerto Rico (Centro Coordinador de Estudios, Recursos y Servicios a la Mujer) in 1984, and so on. These feminists who work on violence, health, and establishing laws, represent the new tendency of feminism. This movement got political power in the 1980s. They organized the coalition of different women's groups, Coordinating Committee Peace for Women (Coordinadora Paz Para la Mujer). This organization worked cooperating with public women officials of the Department for Women Affairs to establish a new law against violence for women. In 1989 they succeeded as a political organization in establishing the law that stated that domestic violence was criminal.

In the 1990s, many other groups that dealt with taboo affairs in the 1980s, started to make some organizations; for example, the group that demands rights for homosexuals and black women, the Christian group that opposes sex discrimination in the church, the coalition for reproductive rights, and so on.

#### **Women's Empowerment at Political Stage**

As mentioned in the prior chapter, in 1929 women who could read and write were enfranchised and they started to exercise the right to vote after the election in 1932. All women were enfranchised in 1935 at the demand of the labor movement. In this process, the suffragists, as a political pressure group also made the Congress take action. Working class women swayed the politics of the political parties. Women took up politics powerfully to gain the right to vote and they gave full play to it. However, only a few women were elected to Congress after gaining the right to vote.

After gaining the right to vote, some women were elected to Congress and more than 10 per cent of members of the municipal assembly were women from the beginning. However, as a whole, counting the number of women from gaining suffrage 60 years ago to the present, women's participation in the assembly is rather limited. On the other hand, in 1996 the rate of female senators was 17.9 % and the congresswomen's rate increased to 16.3 %. Eight women

mayors appeared, and the rate of total mayors was 10.3 %." Therefore we expect a steady increase of the women's participation in the assembly considering the recent progress in women's social status and establishment of laws for women's affairs.

We have to count also as an important political activity that the feminists prompted the assembly and the government to establish the laws to progress women's status in the 1970s. Many feminists concentrated on reforming the educational system and law system to give women the benefit of equal rights as much as possible. They concerned themselves actively with government administration or politics of administrative organs and contributed to reforming the laws for women's rights. With this efforts they established a position for women that was and remains one of the highest in Latin America. We can't ignore that some researchers point out that the US movement for equal rights and US feminism influenced female Puerto Ricans status. But we also recognize that because of the efforts of the Puerto Rican feminists, women's political status advanced and the political parties couldn't ignore their existence. The efforts of Puerto Rican women were big factors in the establishment of women's advanced status.

#### **III. Modern Puerto Rican Society and Women**

The author had an opportunity to know Puerto Rican society having been there from 1984 to 1989. I was especially interested in women who were active in every part of society. Actually I was mainly at a university, but the rate of women professors, students and staff was very high compared to Japan. One of the deans was a woman. In addition, they have a female governor who was an ex-mayor of the capital, San Juan. In Puerto Rico there was already a female mayor of the capital from the 1940s to the 1960s, her name was Feliza Rincon. I got the impression that women participated remarkably in every field and part of society.

Talking about women in general, it was common that a woman supported her family. The divorce rate was higher than in the US and divorce was looked at as a very common phenomenon so the person who didn't divorce seemed rare. People say that Caribbean women are hard workers and strong. I agreed with it recognizing that Puerto Rican society

would not be able to exist without women who play an active part in the society. Next I'll analyze the social-economic statistics of Puerto Rican women to grasp the women's situation.

### **Transformation of Family on the Statistics**

The average family size is 3.3 (1990) in Puerto Rico. It's small compared to many other Latin American countries where the number is 4 or 5. The birthrate decreased more than 40 % in the past 20 years in the Latin American and Caribbean area. It contrasts with African countries where the population is increasing. Puerto Rico, the same as Cuba, shows a very low average number of children that one woman would have in her life, 2.2 (1990-95). At the same time, the rate of practicing contraception is high. The rate of use of contraceptive methods by married women of child-bearing age, is 70% (1980-84) and the same as Argentina and Cuba.<sup>7</sup> This Puerto Rican rate is almost same as the developed countries' ones. Besides it's worthy of attention that abortion is legal in Puerto Rico. It's a rare case in the Latin American and Caribbean area where almost countries prohibit abortion.

The divorce rate, which shows family relations, is remarkably high in Puerto Rico. In 1994, 33,200 couples were married, while 13,724 couples divorced.<sup>8</sup> The rate of divorce was about 40%. Also the divorce rate per 1000 persons was 5.1. It's high. For example, the rate in Japan was 1.45 (1992) and in the US was 4.7 (1990). According to the divorce situations of 25-44 year old women in the section of statistics about family in the United Nations, World Women Statistics, 1970-1990, the divorce rates in the Catholic Latin American and Caribbean area, are very low. But the divorce rates are high in the US Virgin Islands, 12.4%, in Cuba 9.8% and then in Puerto Rico, 9.5%. When I was in Puerto Rico, the Catholic Church was campaigning for united families. But I couldn't imagine the woman who obeyed her husband and devoted herself to the family. Helen Safa, the investigator about Caribbean women, pointed out that consensual couples were more common than marriages in the Caribbean area, marriage is more established in Puerto Rico compared to other Caribbean countries, and as a result, the divorce increased. We can conclude that divorce and unmarried couples penetrated into the society because of the Caribbean

culture and women's economic empowerment in the process of industrialization.

To understand family relations in Puerto Rico, it's also interesting to note the increase of childbirth by unmarried mothers. It doubled in 12 years from 20.9% in 1980 to 39.2% in 1992.<sup>9</sup> This phenomenon occurred to women of all ages. "Unmarried women" means women who never married and women who divorced. However 76% of these unmarried mothers are living with companions. This phenomenon and the increase of divorce reveal the meaninglessness of marriage in Puerto Rican society.

### **Diversity of Women's Economic Activity**

How do the statistics of women's participation in economic activity relate to women's empowerment in society? The rate of women's participation in the labor force was 34.2% in 1995 and the rate of women in total labor was 41.3% in 1990.<sup>10</sup> This figure is not so prominent. However the Department of Labor and Human Resources of Puerto Rico reported that the rate of women's participation in the labor force had been increasing while men's has decreasing for 25 years, from 1970 to 1995, and more than half of the increase of employees was women. The report shows the women's importance in the labor market.

According to the investigation of Blanca Sirvestrini, the employment rate per adult women was 9.9% in 1899, then it increased to 21.7% in 1910. After that it remained around 20% until 1970.<sup>11</sup> It means that women's participation in economic activity started at the beginning of the 20th century. However, after the 1950s the substance changed.

Nowadays more than half of women work as professionals or office workers. At the end of the 19th century "women's job" means work at home and its rate was 70%. In the 1930s and the 1940s women worked mainly in service of housekeeping or doing needlework at home. After that, their jobs kept changing and with industrialization women's job shifted to work as professionals or office workers.<sup>12</sup>

As well, the rate of women in managerial posts which shows women's situation in the economic activity, is high; forty women per 100 men. For example, it is only 8 in Japan. In the Latin American and Caribbean area the rate of women in managerial posts increased greatly as well as in the developed countries from 1980 to 1990. But Puerto Rico is one of

the countries, that has a rather high rate of women in managerial posts compared to these Latin American and Caribbean countries.\*

From the above, it's evident in the statistics that women's importance is increasing in economic activity. Nevertheless it doesn't mean that women have the same economic power as men. For example, the Department of Labor and Human Resources of Puerto Rico pointed out that women didn't work at the appropriate jobs according to their education level. The average of men's education years was 12.5 and women's was 13.3 in 1995. The ratio of men to women in higher education was 100 to 159. Women have more education. Considering these statistics we can say that women don't give full play to their ability in economic activity. As well, the earnings difference between men and women is still high, though it is improving. The ratio of average earnings was 100 for men to 42.8 for women in 1960, 100 to 60.4 in 1970, and 100 to 65 in 1980.

Anyhow, summing up the above statistics, it's clear that the women's presence in economic activity is increasing. The important factor behind this increase was that women had kept being highly educated.

Elizabeth Crespo pointed out women's wisdom that they recognized education as a resource for survival in the macho culture. This wisdom supported female education. She gave an example of a tradition phrase of mother to daughter; "study hard because you are not necessarily going to marry a good man".

### Goal in the Twenty-first Century

In the preceding chapters we saw that Puerto Rican women's social position had changed and improved historically and social-economically. However problems remain to be resolved. In the documents of the Puerto Rican National Committee, made for the Non-governmental Organizations Forum in Beijing where the Forth World Women Conference was celebrated, the Committee pointed out the tough reality for women, indicating actual women's situation. For example, the economic difficulties in female headed families, the predominance of men in politics, the fact that women have difficulties to join the highly income bracket even with higher education than men. Besides, the primary cause of death of women from 15 years old to 44 is

AIDS and the fourth cause is homicide." Social problems in Puerto Rico such as criminals, violence and AIDS affect women's life deeply. The activities for reproductive health rights or against domestic violence that feminists are fighting over are profoundly related to these social problems.

Meanwhile, Puerto Rican feminists have been affected by the political situation of the country. Ana Irma Rivera Lassen, who is a member of the feminist group MIA and participated in the first World Conference on Women in Mexico City, said to me in an interview in 1998 about it. She said; in 1975 at the world conference, Latin American women criticized the Women's Liberation movement of the developed countries as bourgeois' one. She opposed them, so she was isolated from Puerto Rican representatives and other Latin American women. She thought it wasn't correct to blame the US society for Puerto Rican patriarchal problems. But some people thought at that moment that the Puerto Rican patriarchal problem was caused by the subordinate political position of Puerto Rico, so the US existence would have to be criticized in any case.

In addition to the anti-US position, Puerto Rican feminists confront the serious conflicts of Puerto Rican parties that are divided on the political status. Ana Irma said to me that the MIA was the only one that could exist for 8 years meanwhile many other women's organizations existed only for a short time, because MIA maid sure to avoid partisanship from the beginning. Actually after establishment of MIA, the Puerto Rican Women's Association was organized in 1975 to consolidate women's power. But the organization was divided because of the partisanship and ended after only 2 years. The MIA also ended finally because of partisanship. The conflict concerning political status affected the women's movement.

After this, in the 1980s Puerto Rican feminists came to concentrate on the particular interests of women, such as domestic violence or women's health. In the latter half of the 1980s these groups united to establish a new law against violence for women, cooperating with women officials and they succeeded to get it past 1989. The different groups that work on different topics united in the struggle for a particular topic and put pressure on the administration. This experience means the women movement overcame the partisanship that confused and divided it for a long time. It showed that the women movement had matured.

Now a days, we can hear critics say that Puerto Rican feminism is at a turning point because it is weakened and the feminists don't have effective means to resolve multifarious problems besides domestic violence. These critics mean that Puerto Rican feminism is at the next stage and is considering what feminism should be like. It is worthy of attention.

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- i This is a translation based on the article, SHIGAKI, Yoshiko, "A Modern Historical Perspective of Puerto Rican Women ", KUNIMOTO Iyo, (ed.), *The New Society and Women of Latin America*, Tokyo, Shinhyoron, 2000, pp.325-344 (in Japanese). Some parts have been changed slightly because of changes in the political situation. I thank Prof. Catlin Hanna of Morioka Junior College for her correction.
  - ii Centro Coordinador de Estudios, Recursos y servicios a la mujer del Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico, *Participación de la mujer en la historia de Puerto Rico*, Rutgers, USA, 1986.
  - iii <http://www.ElectionsPuertoRico.org/1996/candidatos/alcaldes.html>
  - iv United Nations, *The World's Women 1970-1990*, 1991, USA, United Nations, *The World's Women 1995*, 1995, USA.
  - v Departamento de Salud, Secretaria Auxiliar de Planificación, Evaluación y Estadísticas, Boletín Informativo, Año XI Serie D-6 Num.1, 27 de junio de 1996, Puerto Rico, 1996, p.1.
  - vi Oficina de Estadística de Salud, Boletín Informativo, Año VIII Serie D-2, Núm..3, 30 de agosto de 1993.
  - vii *Participación de la mujer en la fuerza laboral 1995*, Departamento del Trabajo y Recursos Humanos.
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