

Voces Libertarias
Los orígenes del anarquismo en Puerto Rico
Jorell Meléndez Badillo

Libertarian Voices
The origins of anarchism in Puerto Rico
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INTRODUCTION

In the middle of a discourse on a topic that I find very interesting— that of anarchism in Puerto Rico— a professor asked me in front of all of my friends: And you think anarchists existed in Puerto Rico? His scrutinizing look made clear to me his objective: He was trying to dissuade me from engaging with the topic through interpellation and mockery. It was, therefore, an enormous pleasure to find, in the text of the work *Arecibo Histórico* (Historical Arecibo) by José Limón de Arce, mention of a newspaper that, according to the author, had anarchist tendencies. As soon as I accessed said newspaper, I came across some words that would encourage this investigation: “I am (don’t be afraid) an anarchist. I feel in my heart a growth or a beat, with permission from the lexical lackeys, of the redeeming principles of Bakunin and Malato, Reclus and Graves...”

Part of the purpose of this investigation is to answer the professor’s question through rigorous study of the progressive ideas held by members of the Puerto Rican proletariat. We intend to confirm the existence of anarchist circles, in different villages in Puerto Rico, that were organized by members of the ascendant working class. Similarly, we are interested in demonstrating that they were capable of elaborating an indigenous discourse that spoke to the Puerto Rican reality of the

first two decades of the twentieth century— during which the changing nature of cities, coupled with the transformation of both the relationships and the means of production, exerted force, creating a complex reality for those workers who, in turn, followed progressive ideas through which they intended to search for alternatives to their immediate situation. On the other hand, we would like to present a cultural anarchist project in Puerto Rico in response to the popular discourse in which [Puerto Rican anarchists] have been left behind and, therefore, have become disconnected from the Puerto Rican cultural mosaic.

We intend to fill an empty historiography, and to discard the idea of an anarchy held hostage by reformist or annexationist ideologies. Instead, we will start from the position in which it is posed that Puerto Rican anarchy, responding to the immediate historical contradictions of the period studied, achieved the development of its own ideas among individual adherents to this theoretical body. We choose to present anti-state ideas, the anti-political thesis, and the philosophical approaches of Puerto Rican anarchism through an analysis of the literature produced by members of the working class.

We begin from the premise, posited by Ciro Cardoso, that “That which we accept according to preference, because some teacher told us so, because of common sense or for convenience— although, without a doubt, one can consider one or another type of *scientific* knowledge— this can very often offend tastes, contradict teachers, run contrary to intuition, be convenient or inconvenient according to the cases and the people.” Our study, then, presents us with a major challenge, owing to the terminological deformation by which anarchism has been victimized in intellectual circles for the past several decades. This pejorative signification has succeeded in stigmatizing, and even uprooting from the canons of history, a movement that has managed to endure throughout the ages.

Despite the vicissitudes, anarchism, like social and ideological theory, has succeeded in expanding transnationally throughout several centuries. Its absence as a subject of study in academic circles, then, seems contradictory. The new historiographical tendencies that were developed in the last few decades have created space for the approach and analysis of minority groups within the social context. In addition, contemporary historical conditions have exerted their force to successfully change the scenario within intellectual circles. That is to say, after the fall of the socialist block, alongside a range of events like the Zapatista uprising of 1994 and the events that occurred in Seattle in 1999, they went rewriting the approach of what anarchism represented in Western academic circuits. Now, it has resurfaced as a serious area of study, from different interdisciplinary positions.

We do not pretend to subscribe to a specific methodology to elaborate our investigation. Instead, we make ours the words of Paul Feyerabend when he establishes that:

“It is clear, then, that the idea of a fixed method, or of a fixed theory of rationality, rests on too naïve a view of man and his social surroundings. To those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to please their lower instincts, their craving for intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, ‘objectivity,’ ‘truth,’ it will become clear that there is only one principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in all stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes.*”

It is with this approach that we will adopt an interdisciplinary posture to elaborate our analysis. This is of the utmost importance because even though we work with anarchism as an ideology, we intend to study its material expressions within a group of individuals who belonged to a certain social class that “one can neither understand nor analyze outside of the context of the socioeconomic structure which forms the basis of one’s experiences around one’s relations with

the other classes— where your reactions, actions, and creations manifest.” This is why we do not subscribe to a specific method, which would simply limit our investigation.

On the other hand, the sources have presented a major challenge throughout the investigative process. Although we have worked in the Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR), the Archivo Municipal de Caguas (AMC), and the Center of Worker Documentation Santiago Iglesias Pantín at the University of Puerto Rico in Humacao (CDOSIP), anarchism has been non-existent in the documentation we obtained, with rare exceptions in the Junghams Collection in the and mentions in documents scattered in the CDOSIP. This absence should not surprise us if we take into consideration that the majority of the documentation in these archives comes from the government and we’ll see the position of the anarchists around everything related to state and government institutions. We have found documentation in the press and in literature in the Puerto Rican Collection of the José M. Lázaro library at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras. Also, we have taken on the homework of utilizing all of the primary sources within our reach in order to contextualize in the immediate historical framework all of the ideas presented in this press and literature, alongside other secondary sources. It is through recognizing these margins that we delimit the chronological framework of our investigation from 1898 to 1911. This does not in any way represent an absolute framework, since we will cover topics that extend beyond these established years; this period merely forms the chronological basis of this work.

The first chapter is titled “Intellectual and historiographic debates regarding anarchism.” In it, we intend to expose all of the intellectual struggles that have existed surrounding anarchist historiography and the material conflicts they have caused. In carrying out this task, we will be reviewing the available literature on the topic in a framework that is both international and local.

In the second chapter, “A brief introduction to anarchist ideology,” we create a historical account of the idea of anarchism, its supporters, and various events in which adherents to said ideology have participated. We have decided to add this chapter because, as Umberto Eco said, “In a thesis of philosophy, it is not, evidently, necessary to start by explaining what the philosophy is; nor in a thesis of volcanology is it necessary to explain what a volcano is. But, immediately below this level of obviousness, it is always good to provide the reader with all of the necessary information.” It is because of the lexical deformation anarchism has suffered, which will be elaborated on in the first chapter, that we feel obliged to provide a succinct historical account.

The third chapter, “A brief history of the development of the Puerto Rican working class,” we will lay out the foundations of the historical development of the Puerto Rican working class. Although anarchism is not an ideology that is exclusive to the working class, it materialized within the bosom of the rising labor movement at the beginning of the twentieth century in Puerto Rico. In order to be able to put Puerto Rican anarchist ideas and how they developed into context, we should explain how the nascent working class was being transformed during the time being studied.

The fourth chapter, “Anarchism in Puerto Rico,” is the nucleus of our investigation. In it, we intend to make a study of the material conditions that permitted the development of said ideal, while answering various questions and proposing some new ones. We carry out an analysis of the most important ideas and positions that Puerto Rican anarchists took, through an analysis of their literature. This leads into the fifth chapter, “From Theory to Practice,” in which we create an analysis of the material manifestations of anarchism through daily practice and worker organizations while studying the transnational relationships of Puerto Rican anarchists in a broad framework relative to other focal points of anarchist activity in the Caribbean, in America and in Europe.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTELLECTUAL AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC DEBATES REGARDING ANARCHISM

Section III: Puerto Rico in the context of anarchist historiography

Although anarchism was stigmatized in the historiography, it was not non-existent as a matter of study. Academia has contended with a considerable presence of intellectuals openly close to the anarchist ideal, as would be the case of Paul Avrich at Queens University, Noam Chomsky at MIT, Peter Marshall at the University of London, David Graeber at Yale— from which he was expelled and currently occupies a seat at the University of London—, and others.

In the study of anarchism, Cuba has been historically catalogued as a bastion of anarchism in the Caribbean, due to the strong influence anarchism had on the formation of the first syndicates and, perhaps most importantly, for its historiographical presence. Many books have been written about this in particular. Among them, we can mention the work *El Anarquismo en Cuba* (Anarchism in Cuba) by militant anarchist Frank Fernández. Its importance lies in breaking the historiographical silence about Cuban anarchism, a subject discussed timidly in its historiography before the book's publication (with the exception of the work of Sam Dolgoff, *The Cuban Revolution: A Critical Perspective*).

Recently, two scholarly works have been published about anarchism in Cuba. Kirwin R. Shaffer, professor at the University of Penn State, published *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba*, in which he studies the influence of libertarian ideas on different aspects of education, health, family, culture, and more. Shaffer finds himself, at the moment, working on a book about the transatlantic connections of anarchists in the Caribbean, and has written various articles on the subject.

On the other hand, professor at the University of Toronto, Amparo Sánchez Cobos, published a book called *Sembrando Ideales: Anarquistas Españoles en Cuba* (Sowing Ideals: Spanish Anarchists in Cuba). The Cuban historiography relies on various essays written by the exiled Cuban Carlos Manuel Estefanía, and articles like “The Cuban Worker Movement: From Reformism to Anarchy” in the magazine *Historia y Sociedad* by the Department of History at the University of Puerto Rico. On the other hand, Dolgoff points out in three paragraphs dedicated to Puerto Rican anarchism, in a very voluminous work, that “The example of Puerto Rico illustrates how little is known about the anarcho-syndicalist origins of the labor and socialist movements in the Caribbean area.”

In an international historiographical framework, anarchism in Puerto Rico, while poorly studied, has had a presence for several decades. In 1927, Max Nettlau wrote an essay titled “*Contribución a la bibliografía anarquista de la América Latina hasta 1914*” (“Contribution to the anarchist bibliography of Latin America until 1914”) as part of the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Argentinian anarchist newspaper, *La Protesta* (Protest).

In the aforementioned essays, Nettlau makes a list of countries in which there is word of anarchist journalistic production, and includes Puerto Rico. Nettlau writes the following: “CAGNES [sic] - {*Voz Humana* series II, years II-3, 2 September 1906: Núm 7, 22 October [sic]: this periodical struck me as libertarian, though just at this moment I cannot recall precisely why}.” In the 1920s, Nettlau “studied the anarchist publications more than ever before” as part of a process of analyzing anarchist currents globally. We are surprised that a copy of the newspaper *Voz Humana* (Human Voice) from Caguas has landed in the hands of this scholar. This presupposes, indisputably, anarchist press and propaganda trafficking at a transatlantic level, as we will see later.

In his work, *Historia Social Latinoamericana* (Latin American Social History), the Uruguayan intellectual Carlos Rama proposes that during the last decades of the nineteenth century, various

international sections were founded in the Caribbean; but he does not go into depth about the particulars. In the extensive prologue to the work *El Anarquismo en América Latina* (Anarchism in Latin America) by Ángel J. Capelletti and Carlos Rama, they dedicate two pages to Puerto Rico. In those pages, they speak of Puerto Rican anarchists like products of Spanish anarchism and generalize about the Puerto Rican anarchists' stance on the North American metropolis, establishing that they took "an anti-Yankee attitude, to the extent that, increasingly, 'North Americans' became synonymous with 'capitalist.'"

Although it seems like a simplistic position amid extremely complex relationships, we recognize that they only had a few sources through which to develop their arguments. On the other hand, the Argentine David Viñas, in his work *Anarquistas en América Latina* (Anarchists in Latin America), devotes three pages to Puerto Rico, of which only three paragraphs have anything to do with the Island as the rest of the content is based on citations and the foundation of various anarchist nuclei in Latin America.

With respect to Puerto Rico, we gain perspective from how anarchism links not only to workers as the transporters of these ideas but also to the literati of the beginning of the century. In contemporary magazines like *Anarchy: A Journal of Armed Desire*, we can find vague references to Puerto Rico, such as: "The joint work of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Spaniards against the decaying empire of Spain near the end of the nineteenth century offers even more dramatic examples of international collaboration." In the same way, one can find citations of and references to Luisa Capetillo, thanks to the work of Dr. Norma Valle Ferrer, which we will discuss later.

Section IV: Puerto Rican historiography and anarchism

The origin of the Puerto Rican historiography presents a debate that has its structure in the perception of the individual who undertakes the homework of analyzing it. That is to say, we could speak of two origins. The first is representative of all of the books on the geographic space known as Puerto Rico contemporarily, while the other position is limited to the beginning of historical literature displaying nationalist sentiment. Independent of which posture is adopted, we should recognize José Julián Acosta as the first historian because although there existed works like that of the *Biblioteca Histórica* (Historical Library), compiled by Alejandro Tapia and Rivera, José Julián Acosta had the will to criticize and refute some of Fray Inigo Abad's expositions while editing his work.

There are some elements that should be analyzed. This first group of literati with a nationalist sentiment came from comfortable families in a social context in which the majority of Puerto Ricans lived under poverty. The people who achieved publication of this type of work had the economic capacity to be able to pursue higher education outside of the Island; while we know that, although there were institutions or programs like the Conciliar Seminary or the Institute of Second Teaching, the first center for higher education— the University of Puerto Rico— was not founded until 1903.

The classist attitude inevitably adopted by these young intellectuals is such that they are out of touch with the reality that Puerto Rico lives at the time, and although we can consider them actors in the historical drama, they do not understand their social context.

These intellectuals are creating a national discourse that is a bit contrary to reality. That is to say, their historical analysis lacks social and cultural study, leaving out crucial elements like Black and indigenous themes, along with the development of the material conditions and modes of production in which they result. Some works, such as the *Historia de Puerto Rico* (History of Puerto Rico) by Salvador Brau, which evaded censure imposed by the military regime after the North American military invasion, shows us an apologetic, mechanic and linear vision of history. Something that historians of the age kept on repeating and that, lamentably, persists to this day.

This discourse being the option presented to the State, it absorbs it, rendering it official. It is, then, no accident that, after the revolution of the petit bourgeoisie that occurred in the middle of the twentieth century, the Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party) created an entity that would represent the culture and through which the majority of antiquated but dressed-up discourses were officialized.

The discourse used for this official history left out cultural and social elements, as stated above, to present us with an individualistic vision in which one believes in a “history of process.” In other words, the history was written through certain individuals, usually powerful ones, within a context of mechanized history. This is where the historiographical value of 1970s movements lies.

The process undergone in the seventh decade of the last century intended to break with this schema previously put forth by Puerto Rican historians. During this whirlwind, historiography elevates the worker as a “new historical character.” This is of the utmost importance, even though the “clearest investigative works on worker history were various theses for academic grades that were never published,” being part of a debate that was inaccessible to the general public, one can feel the guidelines for restructuring the image people had of the worker taking shape.

It is for this reason that “Not until...the appearance of Ángel Quintero Rivera’s book *Lucha Obrera en Puerto Rico* (Workers’ Struggle in Puerto Rico) and the subsequent publication of a series of articles and books about workers did worker history penetrate ‘the enclosed citadel of the university,’ establishing itself as an academic discipline on the island.” It is important to note that during the age in which these historiographic changes are produced, “the worker class was experiencing radical changes and the dizzying transformation of a plantation-based agricultural economy into an industrial economy.”

Given this, Rafael Bernabé and Cesar Ayala establish that these historians “saw their work as a contribution to the rise of the new worker movement” of the age. We should summarize the struggle for independence and socialism that was unleashed during this period, together with the Latin American intellectual tendencies that outlined responses to dependence on the continent—which, within a materialist framework, runs deep in the Puerto Rican historiography. It was during this tumult that groups such as CEREP and *el Taller de Formación Política* (the Political Training Workshop) began to form, along with a range of independent historians and a boom in the study of microhistory. Within this intent to revise the Puerto Rican historical canon, and to this day, anarchism has been ignored as a historical reality.

Cesar Andreu Iglesias writes in the pages of the magazine *La Escalera* (The Ladder): “As a consequence of emigration, *anarchism is the first source that begins to nourish the incipient proletariat in Latin America*. The initiators of the labor movement in Buenos Aires, La Habana, etc., were anarchists. Similarly, anarcosindicalists were the first ideological influences on the nascent worker movement in Puerto Rico.”

This is criticized by Ángel G. Quintero, as “you name anarchism as the beginning of the worker movement based on ideological influences received without examining, within the history of class, the material and cultural bases that made it possible for said ‘influences’ to take root.” While he recognizes the influence that anarchism exercised at the beginning of the century, he presents Puerto Rican anarchism as a mere product exported from Europe, without taking into consideration the material conditions that permitted anarchism to take root among the working class and adopt a proper discourse, conditioned by its historical context.

On the other hand, Gervasio L. García proposed that it a revision is necessary with respect to anarchism because it is a historical reality in which “it is now time for historians to explain its rapid reception in the nineteenth century and its accelerated forgetting in the twentieth century.” In his

essay on the ‘proletarianization’ of tobacconists, Quintero devotes a few paragraphs to libertarian socialism, which he summarized as “the most complete expression of artisans’ dissent while demonstrating their view of classism worldwide.”

In 1978, Juan Ángel Silén published his *Apuntes para la Historia del Movimiento Obrero Puertorriqueño* (Notes on the History of the Puerto Rican Workers’ Movement). While in a disorganized and occasionally confusing form, the author presents anarchism as an undeniable historical reality. This is limited to mentioning works without the warranted analysis but the value of which lies in presenting anarchism within an academic debate close to workerism at the beginning of the century. In 1985, Rubén Dávila Santiago published an anthology of worker theater in Puerto Rico in which he picks up the libertarian ideas of some vanguard sectors of the working class of the age. Three years later, in 1988, Dávila Santiago published *El Derribo de las Murallas* (The Demolition of the Walls), in which he presents libertarian socialism as a historical reality and tries to put it in the context of proletarian cultural analysis.

Unlike the works that came before it, this one de-emphasizes the debate of economic currents, and makes a comprehensive analysis of the press, the alternative pedagogical projects and other cultural expressions. Two years later, in 1990, Norma Valle Ferrer published her biography of Luisa Capetillo. Although from a feminist perspective, Capetillo is considered the Puerto Rican Emma Goldman, successfully creating consciousness about the existence of these ideas in the international academic spectrum. This work adds to another work about Capetillo titled *Amor y Anarquía* (Love and Anarchy), edited by Julio Ramos. Throughout this anthology, the works of the intellectual worker that were brought to public light by Valle Ferrer years earlier were presented.

It was not until thirteen years later that a work was published in which the subject of anarchism in Puerto Rico was treated with the academic seriousness required. In this case, it was Carmen Centeno Añeses with the publication of her book *Modernidad y Resistencia* (Modernity and Resistance), in which she picks up and analyzes the production of worker literature at the beginning of the century. Her work opens up space for analysis of the ideas of Ramón Romero Rosa, Luisa Capetillo, and Venancio Cruz.

Similarly, in 2008, Arturo Bird Carmona’s work, *Parejeros y Desafiantes* (Comrades and Defiant Ones), was published, in which he analyzes the tobacconist community of Puerto de Tierra at the beginning of the twentieth century in minute detail. In his pages, the author creates a space for representing anarchism as an ideology that was palpable in the bosom of these communities and reproduces, at the end of his work, a conflict between the tobacconist unions and some adherents to the anarchist creed. We cannot fail to mention, either, the work of Eileen Findlay, who has made a rigorous analysis of the conception of gender within anarchist rhetoric from the beginning of the century.

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CHAPTER IV: ANARCHISM IN PUERTO RICO

Section I: The Written Press

Puerto Rican anarchists used the written press, as we have already mentioned, to flesh out their claims, elaborate their discourses, and propagate their ideals. Mostly self-taught, they acknowledged not having mastered the written word, but did not hesitate to write what they thought. The newspaper *La Miseria* (The Misery), which we will talk more about later, advertised to the reader in its first edition that “You will not see scientific articles or works of great erudition, as those who drafted them are workers to whom the current unreasonable society has denied the means with which to reach the most rudimentary knowledge; but one notes in what they publish the energy displayed when they protest against injustices.” They believed that “the sciences were

not in the service of humanity, but rather a function of some elites and a predetermined social structure,” while accusing the literati of being “bad philosophers, bad lawyers, bad journalists and bad poets! Ba, because, knowing the ills that afflict humanity, they do not endeavor to apply the effective remedy.”

In other words, these workers, following the old anarchist tradition, see education as “the precursor of any major, fundamental change in society.” “Science,” Palmiro de Lidia put forth in an essay published in the newspaper *Voz Humana*, “which should be in the service of humanity, is the servant of the dominant class, having all of its conquests to the aggrandizement of capitalism, to the individual well-being of the satisfied, and to the creation of an aristocracy of knowledge that converts understanding of human events into a privilege.”

It is for this reason that, historically, “practically every anarchist thinker has had a specific thought about education, assigning it one or another role on the road to revolution.” We can, then, propose that the pedagogical project exposed by the anarchists in Puerto Rico, strongly influenced by the ideas of Francisco Ferrer and Guardia, as we will see later on, is part of a revolutionary project with the goal of transforming immediate reality through consciousness of the worker in relation to their environment.

The workers who came to dominate the written word should have stayed in communication with the others workers, as J.S. Marcano affirms “to be able to feel and see the reach of modern ideas, it is necessary to relate to the people, feel their miseries and suffer their pains, in order to then declare that, essentially, we march by means of progress....” On the contrary, they adapted “to the environment in which they breathed, without thinking about the transformations of the times; without warning that the evolutions of Emancipation, Progress, and Liberty, follow one another at a dizzying pace.”

For this reason, the notion of propagating the ideal through the available means prevailed. They thought, as the prologue of the work *Hacia el Porvenir* (Towards the Future) by Venancio Cruz asserts: “If you profess socialist or anarchist ideas, I have nothing to say to you; you already know that it is your duty, as a conscious man or woman, to spread, through whatever means within your reach, our newspapers, our books, and our pamphlets.”

From 1898 to 1912 in Puerto Rico, roughly five hundred newspapers were published, of which several dozen were of a working-class nature. As Carmen Centeno Añeses asserts, “The brief timespan in which many of them were published— and the fact that the some of the same editors, like Ramón Romero Rosa and José Ferrer, founded more than one newspaper— make us suspect that North American government censorship may have affected them in various ways.”

Alongside Centeno’s point, we should add that many of the workers suffered economic hardships and did not enjoy the support of the upper strata of the FLT (Federación Libre de Trabajadores—Free Federation of Workers), which often made it impossible to continue their propaganda projects. Even so, we can find rotating representatives of different ideologies within the movement, be they conservatives, liberals, social democrats, and even anarchists and the most radical, who we will be discussing. Among those pieces to which we do not have access, either because copies no longer exist or in order to protect the whereabouts of others, we can mention the following:

El Anarquista (San Juan): Jocular newspaper directed by Pedro Goyco. Released in November 1902.

Humanidad Libre (Caguas): Founded by Juan Vilar, Pedro San Miguel, Prudencio Rivera Martínez, Tadeo Rodríguez, and José Ferrer y Ferrer, and published from 1904 to 1906.

Hijo del Pueblo (Caguas): Directed by Venancio Ortíz and José Ferrer y Ferrer.

Adelante (Caguas): By the group Solidarity! in Caguas.

Nuevos Horizontes (San Juan): By the tobaccoists, from 1909 to 1911.

La Antorcha (Utuaado): Founded by Ángel Dieppa.

Avante (Caguas): Founded by Juan Vilar, José Ferrer y Ferrer, Pedro San Miguel, Prudencio Rivera Martínez, Pablo Vega Santos, Antonio Arroyo, and Tadeo Rodríguez.

On February 22, 1901, the newspaper *La Miseria* hit the streets. Although this paper did not follow an anarchist tradition, within its pages, many anarchists and some sympathizers to libertarian ideas expressed themselves. In its first edition, it espouses its program, in which it establishes that the newspaper hoped to “comply with some of the most sacred duties of honest men and lovers of liberty: to defend all of those who suffer from political and economic oppression, always upholding, as a rule, reason and truth.” Under the motto of “newspaper in defense of the working class,” from its offices in Old San Juan— Calle Luna (Moon Street) Number 128— they propagated and sold it for a cent in “The Tailor Shop of Gámbaro, Moon between Cruz and San Justo” and in said offices. Through its pages, it denounced the miserable situation, true to its title, in which the dispossessed class of the country lived.

For the age in which it was published, those workers who succeeded in finding a job were paid enough to eat at least once a day. According to Gervasio García’s investigation, the statistical table of the labor force looked like this:

Table 3: Distribution of the Labor Force in Puerto Rico at the Beginning of the 20th Century

Industry/ Job Type	Number of Workers, 1899 Census	Organized Workers, 1904	Organized Workers, 1907
Agricultural	211,832	2,832	223
Construction	1,395	165	130
Carpentry	5,125	449	809
Servant/Caretaker	18,453	37	20
Sailor/Maritime	1,595	975	424
Baking	2,337	248	23
Painting	663	120	76
Tobacco Farming	3,683	63	977
Typography	352	44	26
Shoemaking	1,685	83	63

According to the statistical data offered, there were a total of 247,120 workers on the Island. Although this looks like an inflated number, when contrasted with the 953,243 inhabitants at the time the census was carried out, the unemployment rate was extremely high— some 706, 123— even when taking into consideration the people who were not able to expend any labor.

According to Juan Ángel Silén: “The average salary was fifty cents a day; but, on the sugar cane plantations, it was lower, and the average salary was from thirty-one to thirty-six cents. In the cities (where the nucleus of the newspaper was located), they paid more. In San Juan, tradesmen received an average salary of \$1 to \$1.50 per day.”

Illnesses, according to Hentry K. Carroll, adopted the following pattern:

“A reference to the table of the causes of death in San Juan in the year 1898 shows that, of 1,151 deaths, 143 were from some form of consumption, 25 from

pneumonia, 44 from congestion of the lungs, and 49 from bronchitis— a total of 361, or about 31 percent, from these causes. Of 76 deaths from fever, 28 were attributed to malarial, 11 to malignancy, 20 to typhoid, 11 to typhus, 2 to yellow, and 4 to other fevers.”

The literary worker José Elías Levis Bernard paints a very discouraging picture of the situation lived by Puerto Ricans just after the North American invasion of 1898 and Hurricane San Ciriaco the following year. Bernard said that there was “a portion of kids and people who were bad off; ragged, dirty, with long hair falling down their fronts, almost all without hats, with patibulary demeanors and hungry faces....” With respect to the hurricane, he wrote: “After the terrible hurricane of August 8, 1899, destitution has become desperation. It was a fatal insult to the pains of a village, a dreadful disgrace that ripped a cry of pain from every chest— a cry that must have deafened the space.”

La Miseria also opened a space for the critique of political institutions, resulting in a text called, “Why Aren’t We Political?” by José Ferrer and Ferrer, under the pseudonym Rabachol. In the same way, it condemned the migrations in Hawaii and published workers’ victories internationally. Their editorial line, with respect to politics, could be summarized in the following words: “Republicans, Federalists agents, and old-world Spaniards alike— they are the cause of the dreadful misery that, in actuality, seizes our worker” while “libertarian ideas open up the field, and the slaves of the politicians and servants of the bourgeoisie, all that they do is *bay at the moon.*”

By March 22nd, the newspaper began to have problems with its daily circulation due to lack of funds. In April 1901, it adopted a more sympathetic posture towards anarchism, as Issue #9 featured an article penned by Charles Pelletier— of which we do not know if it is an abstract of the work that mentions anarchy or if it is an internal tribute or dedication. The words that were published reads as follows:

Anarchy:

A word that signifies, without mandate, absence of government; and that some have pretended literally means absence of order and of security, as if the word of the government were synonymous with order and security.

But there is only disorder and insecurity where there are favors, privileges, irrationality, oppression, tyranny— injustice, in a word; and it is only to governments that these evils are imputable.

Liberty! It is there that one finds order and security in the villages. Etymologically, it is derived from the roots ‘liber,’ meaning ‘free;’ and ‘ibra,’ meaning balance, equality— what it means to know and to be able. And, in effect, the man who knows, can; and the man who can is his own sovereign. He who is his own sovereign can be governed by no one.

The sovereignty of the individual implies, then, one’s liberty; and one’s liberty order and security, without which it cannot manifest.

Therefore, as liberty is the negation of all species of government, one easily deduces that where there is mandate, there is oppression, danger, ‘disorder;’ and it is not the word ‘anarchy’ but rather the word ‘government’ that means absence of order and security.

In the same way, it published an untitled, anonymous anarchist poem on April 12, 1901. The poem reads as follows:

In the social hive,
 From the laws to spite,
 No one has the right
 To eat Stupid Soup.*
 It is a known truth
 That those who work produce;
 And from this, one can deduce
 That those who do not work, rob.
 I knew a doctor
 Who was poor, and suddenly,
 They made him president—
 And, in four years, a millionaire.
 And in the worker village, to the contrary,
 Forever moving from bad to worse,
 One works with great fervor
 Without leaving the proletariat.

To be able to destroy
 Both theft and tyranny,
 I proclaim ANARCHY,
 The destroyer of tyrants.
 Farmers and tradesmen
 Have declared war,
 Moving towards, across the land,
 All of the villages becoming brothers.

Gone will be the Governments
 That tyrannize the villages,
 And martyr the worker,
 Taken as an instrument,
 And, for greater torment,
 Insult him in a thousand ways,
 And on top of him, they all mount,
 As if he were an ass.

*This is akin to “Drink the Kool Aid” in English.

On the other hand, in Caguas, the newspaper *Voz Humana* was published— a publication that was openly anarchist. This was the printed organ at the center of social studies. *Solidarity!*, which had been operating, according to Rubé Dávila Santiago, “From 1902, [and] later reorganized in 1906 around the magazine *Voz Humana* (1904-1906).” Its founding is linked to José Ferrer and Ferrer, Juan Vilar, Pedro San Miguel, Prudencio Rivera Martínez, Pablo Vega Santos, Antonio Arroyo, and Tadeo Rodríguez. This paper was produced, according to its masthead, “when circumstances permit[ted] it.” Each edition cost two cents, while a packet of twenty-five volumes was worth forty cents. Among its slogans was the famous phrase, “Workers of the world, unite!”

Through its pages, they elaborated discourses against the government system, arguing that, “It never stops being an absurdity, and even a crass ignorance, to argue that the *effectiveness* of a republican regime or the *wise* constitution of a monarchical power will bring us to the realization of so many legitimate aspirations, written with blood in the life of the villages.” This antigovernment posture was based on the notions that any type of government only leads to the exploitation of one person for the sake of another and that “The State understands nothing but force.”

In the same way, they expressed a progressive posture in which they saw the immediate historical context of society as a passing historical phase which, through human evolution, would inevitably be left behind. Their positive rhetoric is exemplified by the following phrases: “Happiness! There is the coveted summit, towards which humanity incessantly directs its steps. Will it get there? Oh, yes— eternity lies ahead of it, progress pushes it along, reason imposes on it, and the gallant and flourishing path of Justice and Beauty shall guide it!”

Moreover, the publication served as a tool for agitation and solidarity with striking workers. The line propagated by the draft saw the strike as an instrument in the fight for emancipation. They argued the following: “Agitated workers: triumph is ours. It has nothing to do with gunpowder, punches, or bombs. It has to do with Archimedes’s Lever, with *general strikes; the last war, without generals; the last battle, without blood.*”

Caguas being its place of publication, it should come as no surprise that the majority of the articles were written by, and derived from, the tobacco sector. Its labor agitation is reflected during various strikes. *Voz Humana*, for example, published during the Caguas-Cayey fabric factory strike a manifesto written up by the workers. The document has strong anarchist rhetoric, which is reflected in its last lines, when it establishes:

Long live the strike! ...We will defend our work that is our Homeland, that is the bread of our children, that is our dignity.

No more tyranny, no more exploitation! Let rise from your chests the cry of rebellion among us, the oppressed, the vexed, and the mocked of always.

To the strike! That is the only remedy, the only road and the anchor of salvation! Workers, for dignity, to the strike!

Long live the strike! Long live the free man!

The publication of this manifesto responded to an intention to ignite the flame of striking within the tobacco sector and, once the issue came out, it paid off. The newspaper noted that, “The attitude of these valiant farmers has brought behind it rebellion in other workshops, which, like them, ask for price increases in various, disguised ways. The Turina workshop has been on strike since last Thursday, and the Quiñones workshop since last Saturday, one finds them in the streets, sustaining the same claims.”

This newspaper sustained an internationalist posture that was reflected in its correspondences, which it made public. We will spend more time on this topic later. Another particularity about this newspaper was that it published its administrative business. In other words, its published its income with a detailed list of all of the subscribers and donors, with full names— details we will look at later, and that were very useful to the police— and expenses, such as the cost of printing, transferring a wardrobe to the newsroom, lighting and desk expenses, the purchase of chairs and the postage of the editions.

We have record of the sales and subscriptions in villages on the island, as was the case for Vega Baja, Cayey, Bayamón, San Juan, Utuado, Lares, Cidra, Ponce Juncos, y Mayagüez. Through the publication, they were able to acquire a series of works that can be viewed in Table 4:

Table 4: Anarchist Literary Works Distributed through *Voz Humana* Newspaper

Work	Author	Price (in cents)
The Two Social Poles	Leopoldo Bonafulla	1

Towards the Future	Leopoldo Bonafulla or Venancio Cruz	1
The Ideal of Youth		1
Libertarian Criterion	Leopoldo Bonafulla	1
Towards Happiness		1
Education and Paternal Authority	Girard	1
To Be or Not To Be	José Prat	2
Where is God?	Gustavo Adolfo Bequer	2
Social Questions	Donato Lubén	2
The Plague of Religion	Johann Most	2
The Crimes of God	Sebastián Faure	3
The 20 th Century Ideal	Palmiro de Lidia	3
Free Production	Girard	3
The Usurious Loan	Blanqui	3
Between Farmers	Ericco Malatesta	3
Sung Rebellions	José María Blázquez	5

The newspaper eventually stopped running, but its nucleus— that is to say, the group of social studies *Solidarity!*— continued with different variations, including of its name. As we will see later on, one of its members, Ventura Grillo, executed a landowner in the city of Caguas in 1911, creating a very deep crisis in Puerto Rican anarchism in the wake of State repression.

Following the libertarian line, in 1909 in the city of San Juan, the magazine *Luz y Vida* (Light and Life) was founded, which was “dedicated to the diffusion of universal worker economic, social, and political ideas, and of criticism generally.” This magazine, founded by the FLT militants Rafael Alonso and Guillermo Delgado López, had a bimonthly deal at a price of 10 cents for each singular issue, while subscriptions had a value of 15 cents per month and 45 cents per trimester. The publication published biographies of European libertarian literati, as was the case of Pi Margall and Pierre Joseph Proudhon, penned by Charles Money. This last was the pseudonym of Spanish anarchist Juan Montseny, one of the founders of *La Revista Blanca* (The White Magazine), which had a great impact on Puerto Rican anarchist ideology.

Through its pages, it published news of international events, poems, stories, a section by Licenciado López Landrón about socialist ideas, and other segments such as the section “Cases and Things,” in which it published tiny paragraphs with different ideas and the objective, according to Rubén Dávila, “to build the revolutionary character.” This would become the organ of New Ideas Club, after its founding in 1910, which had as its objective “to revolutionize popular consciousness, making it walk towards the true grounds of the struggle, which in fact unfolds in Europe and America” through the “creation of a library of the best modern classics for use, analysis, controversy and study of its members...To celebrate conferences, meetings, evenings, etc...It will play a role in all of the protests, campaigns, and public events, of local or international nature...When its resources permit it, it will try to create night schools and schools that are in session every day.” Among its founders, we find the workers Pedro San Miguel, Severo Cirino, Prudencio Rivera Martínez, and Rafael Alonso.

We can also create a record of other newspapers that, while not in the anarchist court, published articles in the libertarian or revolutionary line. Among them, there is the newspaper *El Combate* (The Fight) from Arecibo, founded in 1908 by “the youths Luis Guillermo Marín, Sebastián Siragusa de la Huerta, and the leader of the Free Federation, Esteban Padilla.” Under the motto, “Labor Omnia Vincit” (Work Conquers All), the newspaper served to voice all organized labor successes in Arecibo. Although with a reformist tone, in its pages it published a column under the title of “Rebellions” with strong anarchist rhetoric.

Its author signed with the pseudonym of Dr. Alfredo Panyn. Through these lines, he elaborates a discourse that is extremely critical of the State, politicians, the feudo-capitalist bourgeoisie— a term that we find very interesting if analyzed from the historical point of view, in relation to the transformation of modes of production of the age— and the laws, along with an elaboration of different perceptions of anarchism. Panyn argued: “God? Conscience. Religion? Humanity as a cult. State? ...A huge asshole.”

In Arecibo we also have a record of the newspaper *La Sotana* (The Cassock). Although it was not of an anarchist or even a revolutionary line, this was the organ of the *Anticlerical League of Spain in Puerto Rico*. Its program explained its posture while revisiting the figure of Jesus as an exploited person who preached ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In Mayagüez *El Obrero Libre* (The Free Worker) was published, in which an author, under the pseudonym Hecatonquiro, elaborated a revolutionary discourse.

Although outside of the chronological framework rolled out in our investigation, we should make note of the publication of the newspaper *El Comunista* (The Communist) in the village of Bayamón. This had a loud revolutionary tone, but it was not explicitly anarchist. That is to say, although we can find various libertarian elements in its lines, the group also sympathized, as the name suggests, with communism, something that materializes in its praises of the North American Communist Party, the Third International, and the definition it constructed of itself.

We should take into consideration the historical moment in which this group developed. The global Left was drunk on the momentum of the Russian Revolution. One didn't know the crimes committed against the anarchists, as Voline, Makhnó, Goldman, and Berkman should have signaled earlier. This is why there was a certain degree of support and collaboration among the various factions of the Left. The influence of the Russian Revolution in Puerto Rico can be noted specifically in Bayamón, where this newspaper was published, from the first days of the Russian revolutionary feat, as there existed a group of workers who established the first Puerto Rican soviet in 1919: the Soviet of Bayamón.

It is here that the dialectic of the newspaper *El Comunista* developed. This might explain why there are articles in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat while it also published anarchist texts. On the other hand, they also had openly anarchist collaborators such as Venancio Cruz, who financially supported the newspaper. Even so, we cannot attribute the fusion of both ideologies to ignorance of their historical characters as, within local literary production, a clear distinction had been made between anarchism and communism.

The press was not the medium through which anarchists managed to elaborate their ideas at the beginning of the century as literature, especially what Carmen Centeno Añeses calls “the canon of essays,” was fertile terrain for propaganda. Among the first works of the organic intellectuals, we can mention *Towards the Future* by Venancio Cruz. In this antiauthoritarian treatise, the author elaborates different positions around free love as an alternative to the oppression of marriage, prisons as an obsolete system, capitalism as the engine of social oppression, patriotism as the axis of rivalries between human beings, and other concepts of the libertarian line. At the same time, it delivers a strong critique of the works of Proudhon and Tolstoy, while exposing a heavy influence of Eliseo Reclus.

We have on the other hand the texts of Luisa Capetillo, which advocated for a just society, mutual aid, and the complete liberation of women in all aspects of social life. Capetillo elaborated in various texts, among which we find *Ensayos Libertarios* (Libertarian Essays, 1907), *Influencias de las Ideas Modernas* (Influences of Modern Ideas, 1916), *La Humanidad en el Futuro* (Humanity in the Future, 1910), and *Mi Opinión sobre las Libertades, Derechos, y Deberes de la Mujer como Compañera, Madre, y Ser Independiente* (My Opinion on the Liberties, Rights, and Duties of the Woman as a Companion, Mother, and Independent Being, 1911).

In the same way we have the texts of Ángel María Dieppa in his work *El Porvenir de la Sociedad Humana* (The Future of Human Society, 1919), in which he picks up the principal ideas of anarchism and presents them to his readers, as exemplified by the following excerpt: “The Morality of the State, of Religion, and of Patriotism, with all of its rights and all of its liberties, is no more than a denigrating story of Humiliation and Servitude.” Other texts of the utmost importance are *Voces Libertarias* (Libertarian Voices, 191?) by Juan José López and *Páginas Libres* (Free Pages) by tobaccoist Juan Vilar. We will see in the following chapter other forms of cultural expression, such as theater, that were used to boost and propagate their ideas.

Section II: Discourses, Concepts, and Ideas

Although many individuals subscribed to a libertarian discourse based on the anarchist theories of European intellectuals, we should make a clarification. The local anarchists, aside from studying international works, elaborated a discourse appropriately conditioned for the immediate historical reality in which they lived. That is to say, while they cite the literary productions of Malato, Kropotkin, and Bakunin, just to name a few, they recognized that their reality was distinct. Although to so many of those in the struggles that were fought in all of Europe, Asia and the Americas, their reality felt like a very different one. Before this, we must then make certain expositions.

First of all, the history of a country is conditioned by its indigenous socioeconomic development; it is for this reason that we cannot pretend to discern as identical the historical progress of any two nations, however similar they may seem. Take, for example, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Although in a simple, superficial analysis of the historical annals of both nations would seem to indicate that they had a similar development during various decades, we must recognize that the contrary is true. This is why, although anarchism is an eminently internationalist theory that does not recognize national borders we cannot speak of an anarchism that is identical on both Caribbean islands, as the conditions in which they developed were completely different. This is exemplified throughout history, which clearly demonstrates the difference in the materialization of said ideology in both territories.

On the other hand, in the following pages, we intend to analyze the discourse elaborated by anarchist adherents in Puerto Rico during the studied period. We do not pretend to insinuate in any way that they were anarchists until their final days. We encountered some, like Ramon Romero Rosa, who went on to take a seat in the government through Partido Union, abandoning some of their most defended ideals. Others, like Jose Ferrer and Ferrer, and even Luisa Capetillo in her moment, intruded into the Puerto Rican political camp through Partido Socialista. Ferrer and Ferrer went on to elaborate, resulting in his book *Los Ideales del Siglo XX* (The Ideals of the Twentieth Century)— a title that reveals the influence of the Catalan Palmiro de Lidia— in 1932, a discourse that was apologetic about its stance. Ruben Davila Santiago exemplifies the discourse of Ferrer and Ferrer— around his ideological interpretation of anarchism and libertarian socialism— in the following way:

Forms of Knowing

<i>I. Political Absurdity</i>	<i>II. Revolutionary Intuition</i>	<i>III. Sociological Knowing</i>
I	I	I
I	I	I
Impossibility of accepting a determined regime	←-----> Aspiration to justice.	Scientific Induction (Reason)
I	I	I
I	I	I

According to Ferrer and Ferrer, through the negation of the state and whatever system is imposed for the same purpose of governing their lives, the anarchist forms certain absurd theoretical expositions. Instead, the libertarian, corresponding with how the author identifies, shares the revolutionary intuition and the aspiration to justice with the anarchist; but, unlike the anarchist, possesses a sociological understanding that brings with it scientific induction, ultimately cataloging [libertarianism] on a theoretical plane as superior to the other. It is within this contradiction that the author comes to elaborate some apologetic discourses about the U.S. regime, positing that, “the doubt and discouragement of our village has replaced the faith and the hope in the noble and generous village of the American nation, which, for over twenty years, waved her flag on the southern coasts of our island.”

This concept of anarchism in relation to political absurdity— which, inevitably, leads to senseless violence— is a concept elaborated and encouraged by the bourgeoisie. In his work, *Influencias Burguesas sobre el Anarquismo* (Bourgeois Influences on Anarchism), Luigi Fabbri— known in Puerto Rico for showing us the citation of his work in the text of Ángel Maria Dieppa— analyzes how the bourgeois ideas in relation to anarchism come to be absorbed by the organic intellectual. That is to say, in Fabbri's own words, “to a doctrine [referring to anarchism] that is based on scientific reasoning and that is eminently sociopolitical with evident error can be attributed the paradoxical application of what is solely and simply poetry and art.”

Fabbri dedicates the first chapter of his work to the analysis of the apologetic literature of the individualistic violence that elevated the names of Rabachol, Emile Henry, or Salbat as iconic figures in the anarchist movement as, according to this vision, through the destruction, they would construct the future society.

For Fabbri, “the anarchists are not Tolstoyans; and, for how many recognize that, frequently, violence— and when it is such, it is always an ugly thing, whether it is collective or individual— becomes necessary, that none would know how to condemn one or those who sacrificed their lives with their acts satisfies to this necessity. But here, it is not about that, but about the tendency, derived from bourgeois influences, to barter the terms, to change the end for the sake of the means, and to make of these the only and primordial preoccupation.”

It is for this reason that “there is no shortage of those who, although for a moment they called themselves anarchists, sooner or later passed on to other camps and became nationalists like Paul Adam, militarists like Laurent Tailhade, or socialists like Manclair.” In validating Fabbri's theory, we recognize that twenty-nine years before the publication of his book, in which he defends government institutions and U.S. democracy, Ferrer and Ferrer utilized the pseudonym of Rabachol to defend his antipolitical thesis.

We should also consider other points before proceeding to analyze anarchism in Puerto Rico. Anarchy, according to Ricardo Mella, “is the strict rejection of all dogmatic systematization.” It is for this reason that it is not part of a philosophically static exposition, but rather, continues to mutate before the imposed reality. This has caused anarchists to reject the creation of a guiding discourse to which all sympathizers must indisputably follow. In the same way, “Anarchism does not rise to any other school, nor does it allow itself to be pigeonholed in sensationalism, in positivism, in idealism, etcetera.” In contrast to the inclinations that reduce anarchism to merely its linguistic installation, one should analyze it in accord with one's social relations and one's common discourses.

As opposed to other socialist tendencies, in which they use the names of theories and theorists to identify an idea, anarchism transforms according to one's revolutionary practices. This gave way to the notion that anarchism itself does not exist, but rather only various anarchist interpretations and

propositions. Anarchist sympathizers in Puerto Rico were conscious of all of the historical baggage of this ideal, as is demonstrated in the following lines from the work, *Influencias de las Ideas Modernas* by Luisa Capetillo:

I believe that all of the anarchists have read the maxims of human [sic] love that have been preached for six thousand years in Asia, Christna [sic], there was a messiah like Jesus, later the Emperor of China Yao. Confucius, in the same epoch, later Fhilon, and later others until Jesus...

* “human” love may have meant “love of humanity.”

It is through this rationalization that we have taken the liberty of analyzing anarchist literary production scattered in brochures, books, newspapers, songs, and theatrical works. In the first case, it would be a methodological error to analyze it in a way that is apparently incoherent and divorced from its historical context, but we permitted ourselves to do it under the presumption that these writings were not elaborated in order to expand or to interrogate theoretical perceptions.

We hold that, as argued by Alfredo M. Bonnano in his analysis of the ideas around revolutionary violence in the thoughts of Errico Malatesta, that “only when we find ourselves before a theory or theories that develop one's thinking in a progressive and organic way and that is limited to this, leaving aside that all that that has to to say (and do) is concentrated on the proper theoretical construction” can such presumption as historical analysis be applied on par with the ideas exposed by its authors. Instead, the literary production for analysis was conceptualized, written, published, distributed, and analyzed like pieces of propaganda in pursuit of an ideal. Following this framework, we propose to synthesize the most important thoughts around the common points of anarchist theory, which were free love, the destruction of the State, solidarity, and mutual aid, among others.

Section III: Political and Economic Discourses

The anarchists of the beginning of the century considered anarchism the redeeming idea that would remove all of the ills suffered by the workers. “Anarchy is to live without government within the most perfect order and harmony,” affirmed Ángel María Dieppa, while Juan José López made a call to the exploited in which he put forth: “Tell your brothers to struggle in the redeeming ranks of Anarchy, which gives us a clear path, new days, more ambience, more light, more lessons, more realities, more hopes, with a life of love and of harmonies, with a life of lullaby and melodies, with a life of collective sciences, without the monopoly of instructive schools, with rational teaching that is free and human, without mystical ideas, without vain ideas, studying all of the Orb in its foment, tearing through the fog of the moment.” On the other hand, they recognized the distorted vision that they had of the ideal within the public sphere and identified it as follows:

“For the naive and the ignorant, a thrower of bombs...

For the bourgeoisie, feudal capitalists, and conventionalists, a dreamer, a utopian.

For the rebels, the non-submissive, the real men, a human who feels and suffers the misery of his peers.”

They were conscious of the bourgeois perception, mentioned above, commonly associated with the anarchist— that of a violent figure. It is of the utmost importance to mention they use utopianism within the anarchist discourse, something of which Luisa Capetillo had an abundance,

saying that, “all that is certain of the future, whatsoever, is that it is utopian.” That is to say, they sustained a philosophical approach that presented the relativity of the concept of “the future.”

Even when we know the past and are active participants in the present, the future appears incognito. This is why we could not maintain that anarchism is utopian, but rather that the future in general must be so. Unlike all of the others, the anarchists show faith in progress, which can be observed in all of their literary works, in which they recognize the capacity of the future, through its construction within a program on par with their ideology, to be better than the present reality.

Before this, Capetillo proved to be positive by setting forth: “I do not believe anything to be impossible, nor do I absorb myself in any moment or discovery, which is why I do not find any idea utopian. The essential thing is to put it into practice. Start! Everything else is weakness, and a flawed understanding of human potential. To want is to can!”

That is to say, the erroneous conceptions of anarchism would stay in the past as soon as they came close to their emancipation, as they believed that “the revolutionary acts of yesterday are today acts of a crass conservatism: the revolutionary acts of our grandfathers result today in serious actions for us to take— as our actions as active revolutionaries today will be, in the eyes of our children, acts that are serious and conservative. This is so, because every era has its ideas and its tendencies.”

On the other hand, Puerto Rican anarchists maintained that “society is poorly constituted and its immorality originates in present malaise, and that social wealth is poorly distributed,” as “while capitalists squander the gold that results from exploitation carried out in the productive village, vagabonds cross by bleeding from their feet, already torn by the crags of the road, while the feet of the spoiled princesses sink into fluffy carpets, while the plebs of the mines stay buried under these, the big bankers get drunk and eat opiparously.”

It is for this reason that they recognized as unjust the distribution of capital within the social organization of the capitalist system of production. They affirmed that it is the workers “who, with their rough labor, have produced everything that exists in the world” while they are exploited and barely have the economic capacity to survive. This contradiction led them to propose that this system of production was intolerable, since it resembled the old systems of exploitation, such as feudalism and slavery. On this in particular, Luisa Capetillo wrote that, “wage slavery is modern slavery, which oppresses and has made— and will make— more hungry people and criminals than race-based slavery and the age of feudalism.”

It is under these conditions that “the fatal bourgeois philosophy that was conceived in unbalanced minds” instituted “politics as a vindictive and severe tribunal, treading on the most sacred liberties and oppressing the villages under its iron fist.” This inequality is sustained, according to Ángel María Dieppa, through the social contract. He rejects, then, the notion of a general will, as was conceived by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, owing to the fact that “the social contract is nothing other than the right of the capitalist, the bourgeois, to starve workers to death.” It is through “*the fucking political antagonisms*, the hatred of races and nationalities, and disaffection from the noble cause of the true freedom of Puerto Rico, [that] they have and continue to enshrine poverty.”

The local anarchists maintained that the politicians “have not, nor do they, nor will they do anything other than try to take the eta [sic] and then...let the Devil carry off the workers who die of hunger....”

“We are not, we cannot be supporters of the contests of capital, friends. It is against our principles of emancipation and social regeneration, the government imposture, the ruling despotism, the patronizing authority, the political deceit and the evil, the favoritism and the exploitation of men for money.”

They viewed the political system as a conditioner of the poverty in which they were submerged. Recognizing that the capitalist model, and therefore the hierarchical system of the State, relies on government institutions, they saw as antagonistic the proletariat's participation in party-politics. They started from the idea that "as long as there are governors and the governed, there can be no society" as "true freedom cannot exist during the political-commercial regime that completely absorbs all desires and restricts all rights."

Ferrer and Ferrer noted that the political parties absorb all radical discourse exponentially through the benefits they grant. For this reason, "if today, the worker has the misfortune of changing bosses in this State, forming as an element of that a radical party, the worker will be more tyrannized; the party will be the only bosses and the workers, against their will, for discipline, will have to obey." In the same way, they noted, "the most lamentable confusion of ideas; while they attest to be fighting against a power, they do nothing more than conquer it and contribute to the creation of a new power; more powerful, more tyrannical than that which they pretend to destroy."

The government foments the stratification of society and creates hierarchies in which it distributes power fragmentarily and, as a consequence, "while the idea of might has been more ingrained, while more and more has the idea of privilege become more prevalent, much more has one felt the necessity of being a slave." Thus, "What can impart to the worker the right to suffrage, equality before the law and liberty of work, if virtually, by the mere fact of his existence, he is a simple slave of the capitalist who rents him, subject to his mandates and his caprices?"

They had their enemies of classes very clearly defined, as they maintained that, "the landlord overwhelms us, that the manufacturer robs us, that the owners of villas and cafes exploit us, that the government tyrannizes us, and the police hate us." At the same time, they recognize that the boss is a mere instrument of State power, as José Ferrer and Ferrer affirmed: "We must, then, think about making use of the worker organization, not only against the bosses, but also against the bourgeois power, [...] The State, the Municipality, Government, etc., conspire today against the interests of the working class, and against all of them should the latter fight."

The anarchists of the beginning of the century threw hard criticisms at democracy that promoted politicians, the bourgeoisie, and the State. They regarded with skepticism the changes imposed by the new metropolis in the wake of the North American invasion of 1898. After the occupation of the island, the historical reality in which the workers lived, in all of the spheres of one's life, was altered, as the changes in modes of production inevitably brought about the transformation of class relations.

It is for this reason that they believed that, "Democracy, in the end, today is a farce, constituting the ultimate refuge for political tyrants." Democracy "that one was the popular panacea that cured all social ills, has converted into an undignified farce that enshrines and legalizes the power of a bourgeois minority." As a result, they maintained that the worker "speaks of liberty, of democracy, of rights, without remembering that he is only an animal with the face of a man and more disgraced than other animals."

In the same way, they severely criticized the concept of the Republic as a possible solution to the situation in which they lived. They proposed that, "It never stops being an absurdity and even a very crass ignorance, to maintain that the efficacy of a republican regime or the constitutional [sic] of a monarchical power bring about the realization of such legitimate aspirations [liberty, equality, and fraternity], written with blood in the life of the villages." They believed that the republics "for all of the efforts they make to appear democratic and liberal...it's the same as the monarchy and the empire, it is the authority, the fucking authority that in one place is called a republic, in another an empire, and in another a monarchy. It is crime in disguise."

Juan José López points out various cases of repression against the workers in the United States of America, as some workers considered it the poster child for democracy. López points out, for example, the Chicago Martyrs, the murder of women in Colorado, the assassination of tobaccoists on strike in Tampa, the relentless harassment of members of the Industrial Workers of the World, the abuse of the newspaper *Regeneración* (Regeneration) and its editors, the brothers Flores Magón. He also presents the case of the torture of Simón Radowisk in Ushuai prison, in the republic of Argentina.

They also criticized harshly those workers who adopted this discourse of democratic liberty under the U.S. banner in Puerto Rico. We cite here, despite their extensiveness, the words of Juan José López on this matter:

We are tired of hearing, in a language that is pitiful, harmful sermons that discredit the struggle of the poor against the rich, that disorient the worker in their demands. Behold what one hears from the lips of one who calls himself leader, who believes himself to be intelligent and claims to be a rebel: 'Thanks to this banner that waves beautifully, thanks to this grand American constitution, we can say what we feel and what we think,' and the five minutes of speaking has been brusquely lowered by the tribunal for having been used for free thought and free speech; but in spite of all of this they continue saying the same, as if they were a phonograph, an instrument blind to the caprices of those who direct them:

May the workers raise a strike: the republican empire, the grand republic, immediately imposes policy and everything at the order of the capitalist; it kills workers; it dissolves rallies with bullets, it continues unjustified processes, and the banner of the grand republic continues to wave beautifully and the republican constitution continues unalterably shining in the clean sky of the idiots. And even so, there are those who ask of this same republic justice, after the assassination and abuse that has been realized. There are those who collect oaths to send them to other like assassins who have committed identical crimes.

They criticized the models of socialist republics and cooperativism. Foremost they proposed, almost prophetically, that the organization of production in the lines of “consume according to what you can produce, with your abilities,” instead of the revolutionary socialist proposal to “produce according to your abilities and consume according to, in proportion to, your needs,” such that the parliamentary socialism road leads to an abyss.

They believed that, “Parliamentary Socialism had its reason to be, for life, for existence when the republic was still a revolutionary act.” Recognizing that :the Socialist Republican Party does not have any fight left but the fight of election, nor more education but the political legalist education,” they do not see it as an option for their emancipation. Instead, they believed that even though it was better than imperialism, to lash out against this defeatist argument and utilize a quote from Malatesta to support their thesis: “To the 'Republicans,' it'll happen like that old woman about whom Enrique Malatesta talks to us, having broken a leg, gave thanks to God for not having broken both of them; when the reasonable thing would have been for neither of them to have broken.” In the end, they saw these elements within the worker struggle as “ideas of stale authoritarian legalism.”

In the same way, it is interesting how they saw anarchism as different from the socialist ideal. Before this, Juan José López wrote the following lines:

In your name, the blessed socialism,
Ideal inferior to anarchism
That spreads its progressive lights

And with that splendid and radiant name
Years for a certain aspirational number
To convert into future slaves.

Not only did they consider socialism to be a distinct idea, but they also branded it as inferior in relation to the anarchist idea. We should situate these criticisms within the European political models that attacked socialism as a banner and not necessarily as a practice. Moreover, it seems important to mention that in the poem cited, the author makes reference, some lines near the bottom, to the “LUCHA ROJO” (Red Struggle). On the other hand, Capetillo also calls the ideal the “ESPECTRO ROJO” (Red Spectre). Although historically, the black flag has been associated with anarchist movements and the red one with the different varieties of socialism, initially the anarchists utilized red as a symbol of their ideology.

Luisa Michel, one of the anarchists who fought in the Commune of Paris, proposed: “Lyon, Marseille, Narbonne, all of them had their own communes like we did [in Paris], and theirs were also drowning in the blood of revolutionaries. This is why our flags are red. Why, then, are our red banners so terribly frightening for those people who stained them this color?” And even though on an international level, we can see the intrinsic relationship between the socialist and anarchist currents, we should note that in 1899, when May 1st was celebrated for the first time in Puerto Rico, the workers raised red flags, and possibly did so defiantly to represent the anarchist ideal.

The anarchists had an incredible faith in the materialization of their ideals. For example, Venancio Cruz believed, within a positivist vision, that “humanity will walk to its complete liberation,” as the situation in which humanity finds itself “prepares it to die to the violent justified touch of the worker's bugle.” Cruz opined that “it is not a dream that seizes the men who think, the men who fight for total emancipation; no, it is a reality very bitter for that society which is satisfied with not recognizing the supreme right to live of this grand proletarian family,” as “bit by bit, slowly, with a cool calm, they do want to [recognize the right], the bourgeois society is disappearing as 'the two extreme poles have collided.'”

Although they shared hope in the future as a possible generator of progress, not all of the Puerto Rican anarchists shared a vision as romantic as this since they managed to outline a revolutionary discourse around the changes necessary in society. They believed that “There is not, no, in the breast of the party politicians, where we should go to look for our regeneration, emancipation and development in all aspects of life. Let's go to the breast of the worker organizations...”

They maintained that, “it would be absurd to suppose that the emancipation of humanity has to be done by politicians from parliament; the religious from the altar; the capitalist from the desk, calculating the better and older advantage of SUCH A PERCENT” and that they should utilize the means within their reach to fight for their own emancipation. It is through the unions and the syndicates, organs of their class, that they should concentrate their strength. They maintained that “the proletariat is actually in condition to fight for his liberation, whenever he takes advantage of this opportunism of the rivalry and struggle between classes...Given these conditions of enslavement, your duty is to fight without truce, opposing heroic resistance of your unions **SYNDICALIST AND REVOLUTIONARY** to the institutions present.” And while they outlined a class struggle, the method espoused would be the general strike, which would be the “ultimate war without generals; ultimate battle without blood.” We will focus on this in particular later on, when we give the example of the wage strikes for the anarchists and the propaganda that elaborates on the same.

On the inevitability of violence in this process, the anarchists believed that it was necessary within a defensive posture before State violence. Capetillo, who defended a pacifist posture, warned, “What right do they have to kill Ferrer in Spain, Kotoku in Japan, and the others in Chicago and others

more in other places...*And even so, they do not want explosives or suppressions. If they are necessary, then use them!* Perhaps only governments have the right to kill?"

The discourse questioned until when we could then present the actions as defensive if the worker is being exploited constantly through class struggle that deprives him of the very things he produces. In the same way, they recognized that the State assassinated workers within a legal framework that inevitably put them in a defensive position before these institutions that committed the same crime, but were considered lawful. On the other hand, they considered individual acts of violence as the fruits of fanatics who were isolated from anarchist ideas. The character Ramón, in the work *Influencias de las ideas modernas* (Influences of Modern Ideas) by Capetillo maintained with energetic language that:

Some explain anarchy as a doctrine of crime and violence. However, in the name of Christ, his representatives burned millions of human beings; in the name of freedom, the liberators of 93 in France guillotined thousands....*Anarchy did not commit these crimes*, that some fanatic has deleted from the scene a Carnot, a Cánovas, a Humbert, a McKinley, these are isolated cases, and moreover they do not hide behind institutions, they are forgivable, the Ravachol Pallás, Caserio, and Angiolillos, they are few, [by contrast] the Torquemadas, the Cánovas, and Luis IX multiply with amazing facility.

This strategic divergence would bring them, according to their vision, to the Social Revolution in which “Makes, though the ideas and the men proclaiming the land free with their farming implements, with their mountains, their needles and their ways of communication.” The revolution would be “a base action, cemented in the principle of equality among all individuals in the human race: it is not a revolutionary end, but a liberatory beginning; since “there is no end to the aspirations of humans, but only a means to arriving at the aspirations of Justice....” The revolution and anarchy “will be no more than the BEGINNING of INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL FREEDOM....” But before the revolution would materialize, and later anarchist society would proceed, they believed they should work on some immediate problems within the context in which they lived.

Section IV: Social Ills

Religion was viewed as one of the worst ill to torment the worker, and as the axis of discord in the social context. This is why they created a very persuasive anticlerical discourse. And although there existed some exceptions, like Ferrer and Ferrer, who held Bakunin's line— exalting the character of Satan, as, through rebelling, “he enjoys a free and emancipated life”— another faction sympathized with the discourse that developed Jesus, as others proposed that he was rationalist and even a preacher of “anarcho-socialist communism.” They believed that “Socialism is in the brilliant christianity that undermined the foundations of Roman power for fraternity.” And while Capetillo intended to elaborate an apologetic discourse about spiritualism, they maintained postures against any religion, as we can appreciate in the lines of Juan José López:

The Catholic sinks into the past,
With his illicit crime and evil,
Having elicited indignation the world over,
The grace that in the sky he already had,
Fades in his unholy ambition.
As science dealt him an accurate blow.
[...]
Later, Protestantism surged,
Another farce of wiki theology,
Igniting in men the corners.

With insane sermons and hymns
They preach their mission to the Christians,
Extending their assassin's claws.
And in the march of deception and restlessness,
Infused spiritualism takes part
Pretending to tame the mortals,
Their charlatan farces and derisions;
Heartwarming jokes will be in the memories
That great spirits leave us.

This discourse approached the posture of naturalism and its innate laws, owing to the fact that they believed “With all of that moral code, religion is nothing more than the adulteration of natural morality, manifested in all of the beings and things of nature.” On this point, Juan José Lopez argued: “To believe that there are no natural laws and that there is a divine, supernatural power would be to believe in the absurd.” That is to say, contrary to the doctrines that center the figure of a deity, they suggested the existence of certain immutable laws that came from Nature and which we cannot violate. These supersedes any manmade laws, and could not be defined by legislation. Therefore, it would only be when all men and women on Earth recognized what was being created by Nature that they can enjoy true liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Among the social ills that anarchists attacked was prostitution. When the State tried to regulate this practice in the San Juan area, roughly sixty women were reported in just twenty-three days. This demonstrated, simply, the boom that the sex trade had in the capital city during this era. This practice, anarchists believed, “is not an *instinct* or an inheritance. It is a product of circumstantial forces: it is a daughter of the social condition.” They maintained that if women were treated with equal rights, granted freedom of conscience, thought, and action, “and were not treated like a mere instrument of bestiality” and, moreover, when they could provide, “the means of life, they will be able to make the choice between interest and love, lifting the veil of their ignorance, saving their noble sentiments and destroying Prostitution.”

Their message was consistent: “Prostitution— and let it be known, that the heroic prostitute of the ages, does not deserve respect, consideration; and let us not hesitate for an instant to shake them in our arms, not to enjoy ourselves in their prostitution, but rather to wipe away with movement their burning, tainted tears— they originate in education and in poverty, as poverty finds its origins in private property, whether individual or collective.”

We see that they point to education as one of the propellers of these ills, owing to the fact that through it, official, antiquated discourses that choose to maintain the current order are generated and reproduced. Moreover, they recognized that poverty could lead people to act against their will in order to navigate their immediate reality. We should mention that we are analyzing an era in which the majority of people lived under very difficult circumstances. This is why anarchists saw the prostitute not as a woman full of lust, but as a woman who is exploited more than due to her condition, seeing a need to sell her body, something that did not distance her from becoming one more comrade in the struggle. This discourse appears of the utmost interest when contrasted with the reality of the age, in which the vision held of these women was of an shameful trade, which they tried to regulate through the Spanish State and that, later, the US morality sent into the shade of night.

For the anarchists, marriage also constituted legalized prostitution. It was “historic justice, to better feel your predominance and exert major influences on the popular masses, for which there was a necessity to invent marriage” in which “two beings were condemned to a life of confinement, wanting to reduce that life a simple hovel, to separate them from the currents of solidarity, blind them to reason so that they do not penetrate the grandeurs of life, to subjugate them like two slaves

so that they do not revolt, that's what you call committing a true crime without a name in the history of humanity.”

Only free love could unite two people according to the laws of nature. That is not to say that this gave people the right to switch pairings without care of the feelings of the other person, but rather that the act of loving should be carried out outside of any legal state, basing itself in mutual respect and free choice of pairing with whomever you want to share your time. They started from the following interrogation: “Aren't we born to love and care for one another naturally?” But this action of loving freely, which was an “genuine expression of sentiment of solidarity, does not have room in the hearts of hypocrites and the ignorant.”

They also criticized the carceral system, owing to the fact that it charged itself with reprimanding and punishing people instead of carrying out a process of instruction and reformation. They believed that crimes were the product of social conditions and ignorance, as “those [who] abound in the jails and penitentiaries are the poor and the ignorant, the victims of always, of all forms of exploitation.” This is why they “should raze plantations of industrial instruction and destroy the jails— or, better yet, substitute the one for the other. Instruction and work are the salvation of man.”

We should recognize that the majority of discourses elaborated by Puerto Rican anarchists responded to debates within the currents of anarchism in an international framework. This is to say that, for example, while they theorized about the role they should assume in relation to revolutionary violence, they responded to a debate that unfurled in Europe around 1870, in which they questioned the utility and benefit provided by the insurrectionary tilt of the movement. Even so, they managed to abide by ideas and make them proper within the immediate Puerto Rican reality as a nation invaded by the United States, which was presented on the global political stage as the banner of democracy, a concept that the anarchists lashed out against, as we've mentioned.