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Bio: <http://bit.ly/1hhtRhc>



This project was initiated by the *Puerto Rican Agenda*, an organization of Puerto Rican leaders that seek to influence policy for the advancement of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago. It was supported by IRRPP's Policy & Social Engagement Fellowship which encourages faculty to partner with community organizations on an action project.

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- *funds research*
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- *collaborates on social justice projects with community organizations*
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## PUERTO RICANS IN CHICAGOLAND

### Introduction

What are the present conditions of the Puerto Rican community?

As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans are poised to contribute politically to current and future state, local, and national elections. Puerto Ricans in Illinois have a record of political service and public office at local and state levels. Yet because a range of social issues threatens Chicago Puerto Ricans' continuing socioeconomic progress, it is important for the Puerto Rican community to identify specific political and policy interventions that will strengthen their position.

### Methods

Ralph Cintrón collaborated with Ivis Garcia and Elizabeth Scott from the Voorhees Center at UIC, and Maura Toro-Morn from Illinois State University, to analyze several federal and private data bases. The team assessed the state of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago through participant observations, focus groups, and interviews with community members, leaders, and business owners. The project analyzed many aspects of the Puerto Rican community (e.g. housing, health, crime), but findings about economic development and education are featured below.

### Findings

#### **Economic Development – Conditions for Puerto Ricans have declined since 2000.**

- Puerto Ricans have slightly lower rates of employment than the general population (61.4% compared to 65.9%, respectively).
- The median household income among Puerto Ricans was \$39,290, down from their recorded income in 2000 (\$39,901 inflation adjusted dollars).
- The number of Puerto Ricans living in poverty has increased from 23.3% in 2000 to 29.5% in 2010.

#### **Education – Educational attainment among Puerto Ricans is low.**

- The dropout rates for Puerto Ricans is 28%, a rate higher than that of African Americans (20%) and Whites (15%).
- Only about 13% of Puerto Ricans age 25 and older have an advanced degree. This percentage is lower than the city average (33.4%)

### Recommendations

Establishing a community benefits agreement (CBA) between the community and financial institutions to assist people with poor credit histories or informal economic practices would promote economic development. Also, the promotion of the Paseo Boricua business district as a commercial corridor would support the economic health of Humboldt Park, a Puerto Rican neighborhood. To support education, policies should obtain resources for the Community as a Campus program, which aligns educational opportunities from cradle to career and preserves long-term affordability of public institutions of higher learning for Latinos in Illinois.