

# ***Puerto Rican Statehood Manifesto***

## ***A Reasoned Argument in Favor of Making Puerto Rico the 51st. united State***

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***W***hen in the course of human events it becomes necessary to point an accusatory finger to a Nation known for more than two centuries as a beacon of Liberty, Hope, and Progress to all the peoples of the World; and when it becomes necessary to expose grave inconsistencies, such as the denial of essential rights and freedoms to a sizeable portion of that Nation's citizens, wishing that by exposing such illness a cancer of contradictions endangering that Nation's very soul be averted — it then falls upon those of us feeling the brunt of that injustice, upon those of us who see it clearly, to explain to that Nation and to the World at large the reasons for our grievances, our cry for justice, and our actions.

***F***or over 100 years now, the islands of Puerto Rico have been under the domination of the United States of America. We should remember that when the American troops landed on Puerto Rican shores on July 25, 1898, they did so under the banner of Liberty, with a promise in their lips to extend the blessings of Democracy to a people long oppressed. Today, the full promise of democracy remains unfulfilled for the American citizens of Puerto Rico.

***F***our great principles underlie our position and our resolve:

***F***irst, that the democratic system is fundamental to the life of the Puerto Rican community;

***S***econd, that the democratic system of government is one in which the will of the people is the source of public power, the political order is subordinate to the rights of man, and the free participation of the citizen in collective decisions is assured;

***T***hird, that we consider as determining factors in our life our citizenship of the United States of America and our aspiration to continually enrich our democratic heritage in the individual and collective enjoyment of its rights and privileges; our loyalty to the principles of the Federal Constitution; the co-existence in Puerto Rico of the two great cultures of the American Hemisphere; our fervor for education; our faith in justice; our devotion to the courageous, industrious, and peaceful way of life; our fidelity to

*individual human values above and beyond social position, racial differences, and economic interests; and our hope for a better world based on these principles.*

***F**ourth, that we consider the above the true goals of an enlightened, liberal society; and that these principles ought to be applied consistently, coherently, universally always and forever, without regard to race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, sex, and other human accidentals, by the United States in its dealings with Puerto Rico, as well as by the American citizens of Puerto Rico in their dealings among themselves.*

**W**e argue that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, or applies these principles inconsistently, incoherently, selectively in respect to race, nationality, ethnicity, etc., or through mere indifference, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it.

**W**e, as Americans, firmly believing in the ability of American democracy to renew itself, mindful that others among our Puerto Rican brethren are simply intent on severing all our links with the United States, instead intend to alter the relationship existing between the United States of America and Puerto Rico, to transform it into one respectful of democratic values and of self-determination and thus atone and redeem this blot upon the Nation. The definitive solution we seek to our political status problem is ***statehood, that is, the admission of Puerto Rico to the Union as a State, equal in its rights and its responsibilities to the other 50 states.***

**W**e moor ourselves amidst the great currents of reforms and improvements that have made the American democracy a never ending work in progress: the Spirit of 1776 which declared that all men are created equal; the abolitionist movement which resulted in the dismantling of slavery in this country; the Suffragist Movement which resulted in the recognition of the right of women to vote; and the Civil Rights movement which resulted in the dismantling of racist institutions in the U.S. We trust before God, the World, and History, that in the United States of America exist the ideal environment to formulate just and democratic resolutions to redress our just demands and guarantee to Puerto Rican - Americans their material and cultural progress.

**F**or History is a witness to the fact that the United States of America's treatment of Puerto Rico has not always been one of enlightened liberalism and consistent application of democratic values; instead it has been one of haphazard experimentation, one of a reluctant and even diffident rule. Among these grievances we choose to mention the following:

***T**he United States of America, upon annexing Puerto Rico in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, refused to work together with the local leadership, judging the inhabitants too immature to rule themselves. The United States chose instead to rule Puerto Rico through political cronies who did not always have the good of the Puerto Rican people in mind nor the best administrative abilities;*

***T**heir Supreme Court created a different class of territorial entities, effectively placing Puerto Rico directly under the power of Congress and allowing the latter not to legislate uniformly across the newly acquired territories, including Puerto Rico;*

***T**hat this same Supreme Court defined Puerto Rico as a body politic not in the United States but of the United States, setting the stage for a century of collective self-doubt and identity conflict among Puerto Rican Americans, reducing the island to the status of a mere possession of the United States;*

***T**hat the United States engaged, during the first 30 years of territorial administration, in a policy of forced linguistic and cultural assimilation, incompatible with the highest standards of democracy and self-determination of peoples;*

***T**hat the United States Congress granted American citizenship to Puerto Ricans, yet has avoided placing us on the road to the equality of rights and shared responsibilities enjoyed by our fellow Americans stateside;*

***T**hat this same Congress chose instead to perpetuate these inequalities by creating almost 50 years ago a hybrid political relationship in which, under the cover of limited constitutional self-government, lack of economic integration and sovereignty continues to exist and flourish;*

***T**hat this political relationship allows the Congress of the United States of America to double-tax us without representation. That they do so by collecting monetary taxes from corporations established in Puerto Rico, together with a variety of other excise and employment taxes, with us getting in return only half of the benefits and services which we would be entitled to receive if we were a state. That they further do so by imposing a blood tax on our sons and daughters, who fight in wars declared by a Congress in which we lack representation, and by an Executive which we do not elect, submitted to a Supreme Court that we have never formally sanctioned through confirmation by our legitimate representatives;*

***T**hat these misguided, inconsistent, and ultimately un-American policies have created among us, the American citizens of Puerto Rico, an attitude of despair and cynicism, despondency and lack of confidence in a shared future;*

***T**hat collective despondency has led either to the massive displacement of Puerto Ricans who have gone to the American mainland in search of those political and economic rights denied us in our native land, or has given rise to a spirit of defiance and insurrection among a vocal minority seeking to redress our grievances through violence and undemocratic means;*

***T**hat due to these injuries, the United States of America is partially responsible for the existence of an environment of social unrest, economic stagnation, and the erosion of social peace in Puerto Rico.*

***A**t every stage of these injustices we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury or by callous indifference.*

***T**herefore, *We the People*, the American citizens of Puerto Rico, by signing our names to this ***Puerto Rican Statehood Manifesto***, formally and unequivocally petitioning immediate redress to all our grievances, hereby*

***Demand:***

***T**hat the United States of America live up to its founding ideals and its historical responsibility by recognizing the right of the American citizens of Puerto Rico to sovereignty and self-determination;*

***T**hat the Congress of the United States, having the end of our century-old colonial regime in view, *immediately and without delay* provide clear and concise political status options from which the American citizens of Puerto Rico may freely choose;*

***T**hat the Congress of the United States pledge themselves to honor the choice of the American citizens of Puerto Rico, whatever that choice might be;*

**T**hat when the American citizens of Puerto Rico elect to become a sovereign united State, the Congress of the United States honor their choice *immediately and without delay*, without imposing onerous and unreasonable conditions;

**T**hat the Congress grant a swift, just, and equitable transition to statehood for the residents of Puerto Rico;

**T**hat to achieve this goal, the Congress *immediately and without delay* should *now* take the steps needed to effect our complete economic and societal integration with the rest of the Nation.

### ***Resolve:***

**T**o accept our share of responsibility and blame for the current climate of social insecurity, cynicism and indecisiveness reigning in Puerto Rico, and to fully accept our historical responsibility to change the *status quo*;

**T**o remind, cajole, and demand of the United States of America, throughout all their branches of government, that they live up to *their responsibility* and work toward a definitive, irreversible solution to Puerto Rico's political status problem;

**T**o work tirelessly in order to have statehood accepted and recognized as the sole solution befitting us as American citizens;

**T**o raise our demand for statehood, sovereignty and equality before any national and international forum that grants us an audience, while at the same time rejecting any and every dictate from any such forum that does not include statehood as a worthy, permanent status option;

**T**o challenge, repudiate, and reject in every national and international forum the vile, despicable lie, to the effect that statehood is not a valid, worthy, dignified, and *decolonizing* solution to Puerto Rico's political status problem;

**T**o oppose any "Transference of Powers" procedure seeking to dissolve the existing legal, constitutional, and citizenship links already existing between the United States and Puerto Rico. We maintain that Puerto Rico's political status problem should be solved

within the framework provided by the Constitution of the United States and according to all federal legal precedents relevant to our case. We understand that the process of "Transference of Powers" as currently defined by island separatists and as sold to the United Nations by countries whose inhabitants lack fundamental political and economic rights, is one that is slanted and biased in favor of political independence. Such a process does not offer us a serious solution since it disenfranchises us as a political group by undermining the historical and legal bases of our claims for statehood, equality, and sovereignty. We will in no way tolerate the imposition of this farse upon the American citizens of Puerto Rico as a true and valid solution to the Island's political status problem.

**T**o work in solidarity with Americans of Puerto Rican descent either born or living in the Mainland, to share each other's burdens, and to coordinate a common approach to problem solving at all levels of government and throughout all our communities;

**T**o provide a strong voice to those other Hispanic Americans *who have no voice* and who have no one to speak for them, whether that be within the halls of government or within national political parties. For their struggle is our struggle and although many of them might not know it yet, our struggle for sovereignty and equality is their own struggle too;

**T**o foster an environment of peace and understanding amongst our peoples without distinction, and to reject and condemn every word and action meant to drive us apart.

**Vow:**

**T**o become informed, educated, politically savvy and active citizens, knowledgeable of our history as Puerto Ricans and Americans, at home both in English and Spanish, with ready arguments to support the Truth of our position and to confound our ideological opponents;

**T**o adhere to the highest standards in public debate, without appealing to fears, promising government handouts, using demeaning language or resorting to personal attacks to foster our cause;

**T**o live up to the highest work and ethical standards if called to serve the public in positions of trust in government, business, or industry;

**T**o work tirelessly and incessantly until our cause prevails.

*Asking:*

*F*or the assistance of Almighty God and that of all men and women of good will,

*We, the undersigned American citizens of Puerto Rico, in order to achieve all these noble goals, hereby pledge our lives and our sacred honor.*

*July 25, 1999*