

still shapes today's cities and conversations about the next generation of infrastructure.

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**Mirelsie Velázquez**, *Puerto Rican Chicago: Schooling the City, 1940–1977*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022. xi + 206pp. 3 figures. 3 tables. £19.39 pbk.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926823000287

In this powerful and informative book, Mirelsie Velázquez argues persuasively that urban educational institutions, from kindergartens all the way through universities, serve as microcosms of larger systems of oppression and resistance. As Chicago's Puerto Rican community grew rapidly in the years after World War II, local schools reinscribed the colonial disenfranchisement that migrants – and, crucially, their children – experienced as second-class citizens. Yet the city's schools also 'emerged as a site where Puerto Ricans could work together to confront their marginalized status' (p. 160).

Three central themes run through *Puerto Rican Chicago: Schooling the City, 1940–1977*. First, Velázquez repeatedly highlights the linkages between issues and conflicts in the education sector with the broader arc of urban community development. This is consistent with prior scholarship on the history of Puerto Rican Chicago, which has long stressed the influence of various community organizations. What is new here is careful documentation of the educationally focused efforts of several activist groups, including the widely known Young Lords Organization and the more obscure Union for Puerto Rican Students at Northeastern Illinois University. Among the groups most dedicated to school issues was *Aspira*, founded in New York City in 1961 and brought to Chicago seven years later. *Aspira* of Illinois, initially led by social worker and activist Mirta Ramírez, provided wrap-around services to Puerto Rican youth and advocated passionately for educational equity.

Ramírez also exemplifies the second core theme in Velázquez's book: the gender dynamics of school-based struggles and the key roles played by women. Traditional gender roles in both Puerto Rico and the United States had laid responsibility for child-rearing and thus the education of children on mothers, and not coincidentally teaching had long been one of the few professional careers open to women. *Schooling the City* consistently centres attention on the efforts of women as teachers and organizers, such as María Cerda, who in 1969 became the first Puerto Rican (regardless of gender) to serve on the Chicago Board of Education. Cerda was no radical, and some activists were suspicious because she had been appointed by Mayor Richard J. Daley, head of the city's corrupt political machine, but she used her tenure on the Board to promote increased funding for bilingual education. She had also worked with Ramírez previously and helped secure official support for *Aspira* at local schools within the massive district.

Velázquez's thoughtful treatment of Cerda and her legacy (pp. 81–4) points toward the third and final theme in her book: the need to attend to a multiplicity

of views within the community. Too often, urban histories of social struggles tend to homogenize the populations they describe, portraying a level of unity that is not reflective of reality. Thankfully, *Schooling the City* bucks this trend, giving voice to a variety of perspectives, particularly from students themselves, on conflicts that directly impacted educational practices in and for the community. Perhaps the best example here is the careful dissection of conflicts at Tuley and Clemente High Schools in 1973 and 1974. Student radicals, supported by some parents and by Tuley counsellor Carmen Valentín (later imprisoned for her militant efforts on behalf of Puerto Rican independence), successfully petitioned for the removal of the principal on the grounds that he was insensitive to the plight of Puerto Rican students, many of whom responded to racist treatment at the hands of white teachers and administrators by dropping out. Valentín subsequently became a lightning rod at the school, with students divided over her continued employment. ‘Whether they supported Valentín or rallied for her removal’, Velázquez notes, ‘students stood to suffer the most if conflict continued at the highly troubled school’ (p. 103).

Throughout the book, Velázquez emphasizes the parallel struggles for educational equity in Chicago’s African American community, which was much larger than the city’s Puerto Rican population and had a more established political leadership by the 1960s. The extended comparison is valuable, but if there is any significant shortcoming to this thoroughly researched and thought-provoking monograph, it is in the occasionally strained attempt to link Black and Puerto Rican activism in the educational sector. The parallels are real, but the intersections are few and far between prior to the 1970s. Velázquez helpfully describes the pivotal 1963 ‘Freedom Day’ boycott, in which 225,000 black students stayed home to protest overcrowded and under-resourced schools (p. 66). But she presents no evidence of any Puerto Rican participation in the boycott, even though (as she notes) schools with large Puerto Rican student populations were similarly overcrowded. The likeliest explanation, that anti-Black racism among Chicago’s Puerto Ricans prevented the development of what could have been a powerful alliance for educational improvements, is left unexplored.

Still, Velázquez has crafted an important contribution to urban history, educational studies and Puerto Rican history. It will be valuable at both the undergraduate and the graduate level, and will be of interest to a range of community members outside of higher education, in Chicago and across the Puerto Rican diaspora.

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**Benjamin Holtzman**, *The Long Crisis: New York and the Path to Liberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 352pp. \$34.95 hbk.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926823000317

During the second half of the twentieth century, ordinary New Yorkers faced a series of crises for which a negligent municipal government had insufficient plans to curtail. In an attempt to improve the conditions of their day-to-day lives, these urbanites scrambled to find solutions of their own making. Instead of advocating for