

ESSENTIALIST STEREOTYPES IN TEXTBOOKS ON HISPANIC STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines essentialist representation of Hispanic peoples and cultures in three textbooks, Spanish for Secondary Schools (1961), Mi Historia Universal (1978), and Civilización y Cultura (1993). Those textbooks tend to portray Hispanics as one-dimensional characters that are defined by their essences rather than by their historical and sociological context. The stereotypes found in the textbooks tend to naturalize privilege, perpetuate economic inequalities, and conceal the exploitative aims of imperialism. These stereotypes are less prevalent now thanks in part to the contributions of postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said.

REFLEXIVE STATEMENT

This essay was born out of my pedagogical frustration first as a bilingual education teacher in New York City and later as a graduate instructor at the University of Rochester. While working for the Board of Education, I could only use officially approved Spanish language textbooks on Latin America. In one textbook, the references to indigenous cultures consisted mostly of the names of battles and dates of conquest. Later, at the University of Rochester as a graduate instructor, I was disappointed by the stereotypes and meaningless generalizations present in Civilización y cultura, the textbook that was assigned to all graduate instructors teaching intermediate Spanish. After reading Edward Said's Orientalism, I understood the ideological character of the stereotypes contained in the textbook and how they rationalized exclusionary social policies both in Latin America and the United States.

Prior to the work of Edward Said and other postcolonial theorists, crude stereotypes commonly pervaded pedagogical materials on language and culture. These stereotypes exemplify the essentialist thinking that endowed various ethnicities with certain inherent and set characteristics, and which typically represented Hispanic cultures as inert or as mere nullities. This essay examines three textbooks on Hispanic studies that tend to naturalize privilege, perpetuate economic inequalities, and conceal the exploitative aims of imperialism, thereby forming a part of a long discursive tradition concerning the Americas.

In 1935, the New York State Chamber of Commerce commissioned a study that reached rather sweeping conclusions based on the reactions of Puerto Rican children to psychological tests in English. The study, anticipating an influx of Puerto Rican immigrants who reproduce with “jungle fecundity,” concludes:

The evidence indicates that the majority of Puerto Rican children here are so low in intelligence that they require education of a simplified, manual sort, preferably industrial, for they cannot adjust in a school system emphasizing the three R's. Puerto Ricans are adding greatly to the already tremendous problem of intellectually subnormal school retardates of alien parentage, whence are recruited most delinquents and criminals. Indeed the majority of the Puerto Rican children examined betray a family mentality which should not be permitted admission here, further to deteriorate standards already so seriously impaired by mass immigration of the lowest levels of populations of many nations. Most Puerto Rican children here cannot be assimilated in the existing type of civilization and they are helping to turn the tide back to a lower stage of progress (Pedraza 1996-97: 75).

Notably, the authors of the report deem Puerto Ricans as aliens even though they had been granted US citizenship in 1917 under the Jones-Shafroth Act. This unwillingness to understand Puerto Rican children and to respect their culture caused lasting harm. In 1963, according to a report of the Puerto Rican Community Development Project, Puerto Ricans earned 7.4 percent of vocational high school diplomas, but only 1.6 percent of the academic diplomas whose holders were entitled go to college (Rodriguez-Morazzani 1996-97: 62). At the time, Puerto Ricans were seen as destined for menial jobs or jail, and racist generalizations of Hispanics were common in pedagogical texts. A case in point is *Spanish for Secondary Schools* (1961), a syllabus that was compiled by a committee of teachers from New York State under the guidance of consultants from Cornell University and the University of Buffalo.

Spanish for Secondary Schools exudes an air of expertise that can be detected in such examples of crass essentialism as: “The Latin American considers his home his sanctuary. He is devoted to his family and considers that his first duty is to protect his home life against intrusion” (Cadoux 1961: 143). This passage seems to imply that there are places in the world where homes are not sanctuaries and where home intruders are actually welcome. The syllabus ignores vast cultural, racial, and linguistic differences among Hispanic groups in order to subsume them into a homogenous collective of Latin Americans. The syllabus also represents cultural identity in Latin America as static, even though identity, as the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano observes, “is no museum piece sitting stock-still in a display case, but rather the endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life” (1988: 125).

Here is another cultural gem from the syllabus: “Because of his keen sense of personal pride, the Latin American does not take adverse criticism objectively. His sensitivity to criticism may lead him to become angry, bitter and revengeful” (Cadoux 1961: 142). By implicitly situating resentment in the genetic makeup or geography of the peoples of Latin America, the syllabus conceals such historical causes for resentment as the U. S. military occupations of Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti in the early twentieth century, and the CIA-orchestrated overthrow of the democratically elected government of Guatemala in 1954.

The authors of *Spanish for Secondary Schools* neglect to mention the linguistic diversity of Spain with its many speakers of *gallego*, Basque, and Catalan. The textbook posits a distinct Spanish national character: “The Spaniard is primarily a man of feeling, rather than of action, foresight or method. His overvaluation of the individual diminishes his sense of solidarity with the larger community” (Cadoux 1961: 139). The authors fail to consider that if the people of Spain seemed somewhat lacking in expressions of solidarity in 1961, then perhaps the repressive Franco dictatorship, which by then had already ruled Spain for three decades, might have been at least partly to blame.

The authors further identify impatience as a facet of this innate Spanish individualism: “The Spaniard is impatient in the handling of details for the accomplishment of daily routines and long-range projects. This lack of patience accounts in part for Spain’s lack of progress in science” (Cadoux 1961: 140). Spain’s shortcomings in science, then, appear to arise out of the peculiarities of the Spanish psyche rather than from historical factors such as the expulsion of the Moors and Jews from Spain, or the role of the Inquisition in stifling inquiry. The innate impatience of Spaniards, it seems, does not extend to art and literature, unless one believes that Cervantes wrote *Don Quijote* in a feverish night of creation or that Picasso resorted to cubism out of laziness and a desire to save time.

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It is not as though the authors of *Spanish for Secondary Schools* were unaware of the shortcomings of their approach to culture. Although they would have us believe that nature rather than history determines cultural identity, the authors nonetheless acknowledge that “generalizations regarding the characteristics of any national group will, of necessity, be limited and faulty” and they offer their syllabus with reservations “because of the differences in the character of the Spanish people in different parts of Spain and because of the dual nature of the Spanish character as a whole” (Cadoux 1961: 139). Despite this caveat, the authors proceed to make a series of generalizations that now seem hopelessly dated.

The authors of *Spanish for Secondary Schools* write in an old, discursive tradition about the Americas. This tradition is exemplified by this quote from American journalist Richard Harding Davis: “The Central American citizen is no more fit for a republican form of government than he is for an arctic expedition” (Black 1988: 115).¹ Davis speaks the language of power, which postulates violence, corruption, and dictatorship as endemic to Central America, and which ignores native voices. In his Nobel Prize address, Gabriel García Márquez lamented the predicament of invisibility bestowed on Latin America, stating that “the interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary” (Galeano 1988: 262).

Mi Historia Universal, which was first published in 1962, epitomizes the essential invisibility of the indigenous peoples of the Americas in pedagogical texts. This social studies textbook authored by two well-known Venezuelan professors was assigned to a bilingual education class that I taught in a public junior high school during the late eighties.² The textbook seems expressly designed to induce terminal boredom in students. It encourages rote memorization and does not enable students to make meaningful sense of the past. The epigram from Cicero which precedes the title page of this textbook seems especially malapropos given the extraordinary success of the authors in annihilating curiosity: “History is a witness to the ages, the light of truth, the vital life of memory, the teacher of life, and the herald of antiquity” (Bártoli and Martínez 1978: 3).³

The chapter on the conquest of the Americas consists of a dreary and interminable recitation of the names of Spanish *conquistadores* along with an anachronistic list of the regions that they conquered. This extended excerpt from the fourth edition of *Mi Historia Universal* (1978) conveys its tedium:

Mexico was conquered by Hernán Cortez in 1519 after a great struggle against the natives. Central America was conquered from two expedition sites, one from Panama and the other

from Mexico. In 1560, after several expeditions, Juan Cervellón and Juan Estrada Rávago began the veritable conquest of Costa Rica, which was continued by Juan Vázquez Coronado, who founded the city of Cartago in 1564. Nicaragua was conquered by Francisco Hernández de Cordoba, who founded the cities of Granada, León, and Nueva Segovia. Honduras was conquered by Gil González Dávila and Hernandez de Cordoba. Guatemala was discovered and conquered by Pedro de Alvarado in 1524. El Salvador was discovered by Pedro de Alvarado in 1524. In 1528 the city of San Salvador was founded, which was attributed to Jorge Alvarado. Nueva Granada was conquered by Alonso de Ojeda, Rodrigo de Bastidas and Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada. Venezuela was conquered by Juan de Ampies, Ambrosio Alfinger, Nicolas Federman, Juan Pérez de Tolosa, Juan de Villegas, Francisco Fajardo, Juan Rodriguez Suárez, Diego de Losada, Diego de Ordaz, Antonio de Berrio and Diego de Serpa (Bártoli and Martínez 1978: 226).⁴

The textbook proceeds in this vein to describe the conquests of territories designated as Peru, Quito, Río de la Plata, Brazil, North America, and Canada, all which seemingly already existed as geographical entities at the time of their conquest. On the anachronistic map that accompanies this chapter, Panama, which did not become a republic until 1903, borders, not Colombia but “Nueva Granada,” which might refer to the *virreinato* or Spanish colony by that name, which existed from 1717 to 1819, or perhaps to a republic by that name which existed for a few years during the mid-nineteenth century.

The chapter is mostly a long roster of *conquistadores* and conquered territories. There is no mention of the vanquished civilizations or the violence that accompanied the conquest of the Americas, which is described as “a true epic” (“*una verdadera epopeya*”; Bártoli and Martínez 1978: 225). The single reference to natives in México (“*los naturales*”), which appears in the previous passage cited above, reveals nothing about them. Although the chapter notes in passing that slavery was a form of social organization in the Spanish colonies, it fails to mention which peoples were enslaved, how they were enslaved, or who enslaved them. To represent indigenous civilizations as essential ciphers is to abet their disappearance. It was as if the vast territories of the Americas were devoid of inhabitants and were simply stages on which *conquistadores* could strike majestic poses. The chapter contains about a dozen illustrations and a poem by José Santos Chocano, titled “Los Conquistadores,” which is devoted to their marvelous apotheosis:

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Pizarro, he with the raised brow.
Cortez, he with the wavy hair.
Alvarado passes by on his restless steed;
Valdivia leads his by the reins.
Who is he? And who is that other one?
They fight on without end,
like all those who share the glow
of the conquerors of life.
Covered in gold, the hilt of the sword;
armor covered in glitter;
full of sun, the shining helmet:
they pass by tremulous with light,
as if embroidered in colors
on the fine tapestries of Damascus.
(Bártoli and Martínez 1978: 226)⁵

To read textbooks like *Spanish for Secondary Schools* and *Mi Historia Universal* today is to sense how much our intellectual and pedagogical landscape has changed, thanks in part to Edward Said. In his landmark study *Orientalism*, Said expresses his debt to Michel Foucault for his notion of discourse (Said 1994: 3). The false objectivity claimed by Orientalist discourses resembles the seemingly detached, professional tone in the clinical analysis of sex that Foucault describes in the *History of Sexuality*. Neither Said nor Foucault purport to reveal the truth about the Orient or about sex, but rather they demonstrate how dominative discourse conditions our view of those subjects.

According to Foucault, to understand how power conditions sex, one must recognize who is allowed to speak, the way in which sex is put into discourse, and the manner in which the mechanisms of the discourse remain concealed (Foucault 1990: 11, 86). There is a similar concealment in the mythic discourse of Orientalism, which as Said notes, has a “chronic tendency to deny, suppress, or distort the cultural context of... systems of thought in order to maintain the fiction of its scholarly disinterest” (Said 1994: 321, 345). Said cites Antonio Gramsci’s observation that critical elaboration must begin with seeing oneself as the result of a historical process (Said 1994: 25).

Orientalist texts, according to Said,

create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it (Said 1994: 94).

The same sort of discursive tradition restricted discussion about sex, for as Foucault points out, “the learned discourse on sex that was pronounced in the nineteenth century was imbued with age-old delusions, but also with systematic blindnesses: a refusal to see and to understand” (Foucault 1990: 55).

In dominative discourses on sex and on the Orient, people are frozen in time rather than seen as participating in a dynamic process of realization (Said 1994: 321). Foucault notes a similar stasis in the clinicalization of sex, which casts people as sexual types that suffer from perversions to be studied and treated. The experts fail to see, or refuse to acknowledge, sexual characteristics as latent in individuals who vary from one psychological moment to the next. A similar falsification takes place in Orientalism, which as Said tells us,

approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint; this suggests both an enduring Western essence, which observes the Orient from afar and from, so to speak, above. The false position hides historical change. Even more important... it hides the *interests* of the Orientalist (Said 1994: 333).

To illustrate the static cultural reality that Orientalism depicts, Said quotes the following opinion of Lord Cromer, who served as the English representative in Egypt from 1882 to 1902:

Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind. The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature skeptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description (Said 1994: 38).

This kind of dehumanizing imagery, Said tells us, serves to justify the right “not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it” and pervades the cinema, which relegates Arabs to such roles as “slave trader, camel driver, money changer, colorful scoundrel” (Said 1994: 108, 287).

The insights of Said and Foucault profoundly influenced textual representations of marginalized peoples. The years immediately before and after the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary witnessed critical reexaminations of long-held assumptions. Eduardo Galeano eloquently speaks of peoples

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Who are not, but could be.

Who don't speak languages, but dialects.

Who don't have religions, but superstitions.

Who don't create art, but handicrafts.

Who don't have culture, but folklore.

Who are not human beings, but human resources.

Who do not have faces, but arms.

Who do not have names, but numbers (*Galeano* 1991: 73).

During the nineties, social scientists continued to examine essentialist thinking that buttressed privilege. Thomas C. Patterson observes that

dominant groups tend to homogenize other classes and communities, stressing only a single dimension of their substance. In the process, the civilized impoverish their own understanding of these other groups and obscure their own affinity with them. Ultimately, this fuels their fear of these groups, from whom they seize goods and labor (Patterson 1987: 87-88).

J. M. Blaut shows how stereotypes (such as the belief that Africans are congenitally better suited than Europeans to labor under the hot sun) serve to rationalize theft and slavery (Blaut 1993: 70).

Notwithstanding the postcolonial scholarship cited above, *Civilización y cultura* is one textbook that points to the survival of willful non-understanding, to judge from certain passages in its fifth edition (1993).⁶ Its authors largely ignore the history of the conquest of the Americas, stating that “the presence of the Indians provided the colonists with sufficient manual labor. The Indians already had a tradition of turning over most of their products to their chiefs, so it was easy for them to substitute one master for another” (Copeland 1993: 81).⁷ The authors naturalize the theft of the resources and lands of native peoples whose nature it was to turn over willingly the fruit of their labor to their masters. They conceal the violent subjugation of indigenous peoples, to which chroniclers such as Bartolomé de las Casas bore witness. They ignore the numerous Indian revolts against Spanish rule, such as the one led by Tupac Amaru II in the Andes during the late eighteenth century.

Despite the fact that only about three percent of Latin Americans speak an indigenous language, the authors of *Civilización y cultura* present the tenuous survival of a few indigenous languages and cultures, and their failure to assimilate into mainstream societies, as a problem:

The Indians of the New World contributed the potato (the Incas), chocolate and the tomato (the Aztecs) and corn (the Mayans) to the world's stock of edibles, besides other useful or artistic things. Nonetheless, the Indian represents, in some

Hispano-American countries, the most serious social and economic problem. In Mexico, Central America and the Andean countries there are still Indians who do not speak Spanish. (Copeland 1993: 22).⁸

Indians appear to be a problem because of who they are. The real problem, however, is how the experts perceive, or fail to perceive, indigenous civilizations and their spiritual universes. The authors of *Civilización y Cultura* cite, for instance, Diego de Landa, bishop of Yucatán during the late 1500s, as an authority on Mayan culture: “Bishop Diego de Landa, who investigated Mayan culture in the seventeenth century, tells us that the Mayans felt great sadness in the face of death. They lamented death loudly, attributing it to the Devil or the god of evil” (Copeland 1993: 71).⁹ This sort of meaningless generalization adds little to our understanding of Mayan culture.

The authors ignore the fact that Bishop Landa, that elucidator of Mayan mysteries, was responsible for the destruction of most of the Mayan codices, the hieroglyphic rolls written on bark, thereby erasing almost all the written memory of Mayan culture. The most spectacular instance of destruction occurred in 1562, when the bishop ordered more than five thousand religious images and at least twenty-seven codices to be burned in a bonfire. Thanks to this suppression of knowledge, the manuscripts of only three codices survive, along with the fragments of a fourth. Thus, Mayan culture came to be known in Europe mostly through the writings of Diego de Landa himself. The textbook ignores the cruelty of this “expert” on Mayan culture. Although these practices were no longer sanctioned by the Church, the bishop held an inquisition in which Mayans were hoisted in the air and tortured.

The authors of *Civilización y Cultura* frame indigenous cultures through such leading questions as “How should the modern world judge ancient cultures when human sacrifice was practiced among them?” (Copeland 1993: 17).¹⁰ They deprive people of historical context as in this summation of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States:

Their experience in this country has not been a very good one. Puerto Ricans are probably among the poorest groups in the nation. They are typically from the tropical countryside of the island and when they come to the urban, industrialized, and cold north, they end up disoriented. They do not have the necessary aptitudes or abilities to find good jobs and they are resigned to menial jobs. Nevertheless, there must be a powerful attraction for them since they are the group of Hispanics who can easily return to their land if they so wish. That is to say that however poor their conditions in New York may be, they must have been worse on the island (Copeland 1993: 176).¹¹

Puerto Ricans, in this passage, appear to subsist in U.S. cities in somewhat of a daze. In a manner reminiscent of the 1935 Chamber of Commerce report on Puerto Rican children, the authors of this textbook conceal the economic and political forces that displaced *jibaros*, Puerto Rican peasants, from their small farms, where they used to grow pineapple and coffee, to the sugar mills and factories and then to the United States.

Within a decade after the occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898, U. S. corporations already owned more than three quarters of the farmland on the island. During the nineteen thirties, with male workers beginning to unionize, the U. S. government sought to reduce labor costs in Puerto Rico by displacing women from the home into the factory. The colonial government initiated a program that sterilized more than a third of the women in Puerto Rico over the course of four decades (García 1982). Shortly after the Second World War, the U. S. government took over most of the island of Vieques, displacing most of the inhabitants in order to set up a naval base and target practice range.¹² For several decades in the late twentieth century, tax-exempt pharmaceutical and petrochemical industries contaminated the island's environment as unemployment rose. To this date, Puerto Ricans living on the island cannot vote in federal elections and lack voting representatives in the U. S. Congress.

And yet to read *Civilización y Cultura*, one would think that underdevelopment, poverty, and crime result from congenital defects in Puerto Ricans rather than from colonization and globalization. Throughout Latin America, governments privatize public utilities and slash subsidies for health care and education. Free trade agreements heighten labor repression and accelerate environmental destruction. The misery of the working poor serves to maximize corporate profits.

To truly experience other cultures, we must relegate to the past the pseudoscientific categorization that Arkady Averchenko satirizes:

The History of the Midianites is lost in the darkness of the ages and is not known. Nonetheless, scientists distinguish three separate periods in it: the first about which nothing is known; the second about which one can say the same; and the third, which followed the first two (Weidemann 1977: 243).

Thanks to the endeavours of critics such as Said, textbooks now rarely portray Hispanics as one-dimensional character types that are defined by their essences rather than by historical and sociological context. As a result, we are better able to perceive cultures that, though endangered, are nonetheless capable of renewal.

ENDNOTES

¹In 1898, two years after Harding wrote those words, the United States seized Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. William Randolph Hearst used his newspaper empire to promote a false case for that war by falsely blaming Spain for an accidental internal explosion on the USS Maine. In 1903, the United States sent warships to wrest Panama from Colombia, auguring the construction of the Panama Canal.

²All textbooks used in public schools had to be on a list of textbooks approved for use by the New York City Board of Education.

³"*La Historia es testigo de las edades, luz de la verdad, vida de la memoria, maestro de la vida y heraldo de la antigüedad.*" The translation of this passage and all others in this essay are my own.

⁴"*México fue conquistado por Hernán Cortés en 1519 después de una tremenda lucha con los naturales. Centroamérica fue conquistada a través de dos centros expedicionarios. El que partía de Panamá y el de México. En 1560, después de varias expediciones, Juan Cervellón y Juan Estrada Rávago, inician la verdadera conquista de Costa Rica. La continuó Juan Vázquez Coronado, quien fundó la ciudad de Cartago en 1564. Nicaragua fue conquistada por Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, quien fundó las ciudades de Granada, León y Nueva Segovia. Honduras fue conquistada por Gil González Dávila y Hernández de Córdoba. Guatemala fue descubierta y conquistada por Pedro de Alvarado en 1524. El Salvador fue descubierto por Pedro de Alvarado en 1524. En 1528 fue fundada la ciudad de San Salvador. Se atribuye su fundación a Jorge Alvarado. La Nueva Granada fue conquistada por Alonso de Ojeda, Rodrigo de Bastidas y Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada. Venezuela fue conquistada por Juan de Ampies, Ambrosio Alfínger, Nicolás Federman, Juan Pérez de Tolosa, Juan de Villegas, Francisco Fajardo, Juan Rodríguez Suárez, Diego de Losada, Diego de Ordaz, Antonio de Berrio y Diego de Serpa.*"

⁵*Ese, Pizarro: el de la frente erguida
Ese, Cortés: el del cabello undoso
Pasa Alvarado en su corcel nervioso;
Valdivia lleva el suyo de la brida.
¿Y ese? ¿Y aquél? En púrpura encendida
envueltos van bregando sin reposo,
a manera del grupo luminoso
de los conquistadores de la vida.
Cuajado en oro, el puño del cuchillo;
la coraza, cubierta de fulgores;
pleno de sol, el reluciente casco:
pasando van con el temblor de un brillo,
cual si fuesen bordados en colores
sobre grandes tapices de Damasco.*

⁶This textbook was assigned for all sections of intermediate Spanish at the University of Rochester while I taught there as a graduate instructor from 1993 to 1996.

⁷"*La presencia de los indios proveyó a los colonos de mano de obra en cantidad suficiente. Los indios tenían una tradición ya establecida de entregar gran parte de sus productos a sus jefes, así que fue fácil para ellos sustituir un amo por otro.*"

⁸"*Los indios del Nuevo Mundo contribuyeron la papa (los incas), el chocolate y el tomate (los aztecas) y el maíz (los mayas) al surtido mundial de comestibles además de varias otras*

cosas útiles o artísticas. Sin embargo, hoy el indio representa en algunos países hispanoamericanos el problema social y económico de mayor gravedad. En México, Centroamérica y los países andinos hay todavía indios que no hablan castellano.”

⁹“El Obispo Diego de Landa, que investigó la cultura maya en el siglo XVI, nos dice que los mayas sentían gran tristeza ante la muerte. Se lamentaban ruidosamente y atribuían el hecho al Diablo o al dios del mal.”

¹⁰“¿Cómo debe el mundo modern juzgar las culturas antiguas cuando se encuentran prácticas como el sacrificio humano?”

¹¹“Su experiencia en el país no ha sido muy buena. Probablemente constituyen uno de los grupos más pobres de la nación. Frecuentemente son personas del campo tropical de la isla y al encontrarse en el norte – urbano, industrializado y frío – se sienten bastante desorientadas. No poseen las capacidades necesarias para encontrar buenos puestos y se resignan a las tareas más básicas. Al fin, sin embargo, debe haber alguna atracción fuerte porque de todos los grupos hispánicos en los Estados Unidos, éste es el único que puede volver fácilmente a su tierra si lo quieren. Es decir que, por malas que sean sus condiciones en Nueva York, habrán sido peores en la isla.”

¹²The U.S. Navy, which withdrew from Vieques in 2003, used munitions that contained depleted uranium. The remaining inhabitants of Vieques suffer from cancer rates over thirty percent higher than the rest of Puerto Rico.

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