

The Effects of U.S. Tourism and Militarization in Puerto Rico

Presenters:

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Land Acknowledgement

We would like to begin this presentation with a land acknowledgment. Iowa State University is located on the ancestral lands and territory of the Baxoje (bah-kho-dzhe), or Ioway Nation. The United States obtained the land from the Meskwaki and Sauk nations in the Treaty of 1842. We wish to recognize our obligations to this land and to the people who took care of it, as well as to the 17,000 Native people who live in Iowa today.



Rodrigo Romero
Senior
Electrical Engineering



Grace Helton
Junior
Global Resource Systems



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Sophomore
Architecture



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Senior
Kinesiology and Health

NCORE-ISCORE Mission

The NCORE-ISCORE Project supports Iowa State University's diversity efforts. The project provides positive interactions and dialogue regarding race, ethnicity, and multicultural relations through local and national initiatives including participation in two conferences: NCORE (National Conference on Race & Ethnicity) and ISCORE (Iowa State Conference on Race & Ethnicity).

Agenda

- Background of Puerto Rico
- Impacts due to Militarization
 - Cultural
 - Environmental
 - Health
- Impacts due to Tourism
 - Environmental
 - Economical
 - Social
- Conclusion

Research Statement

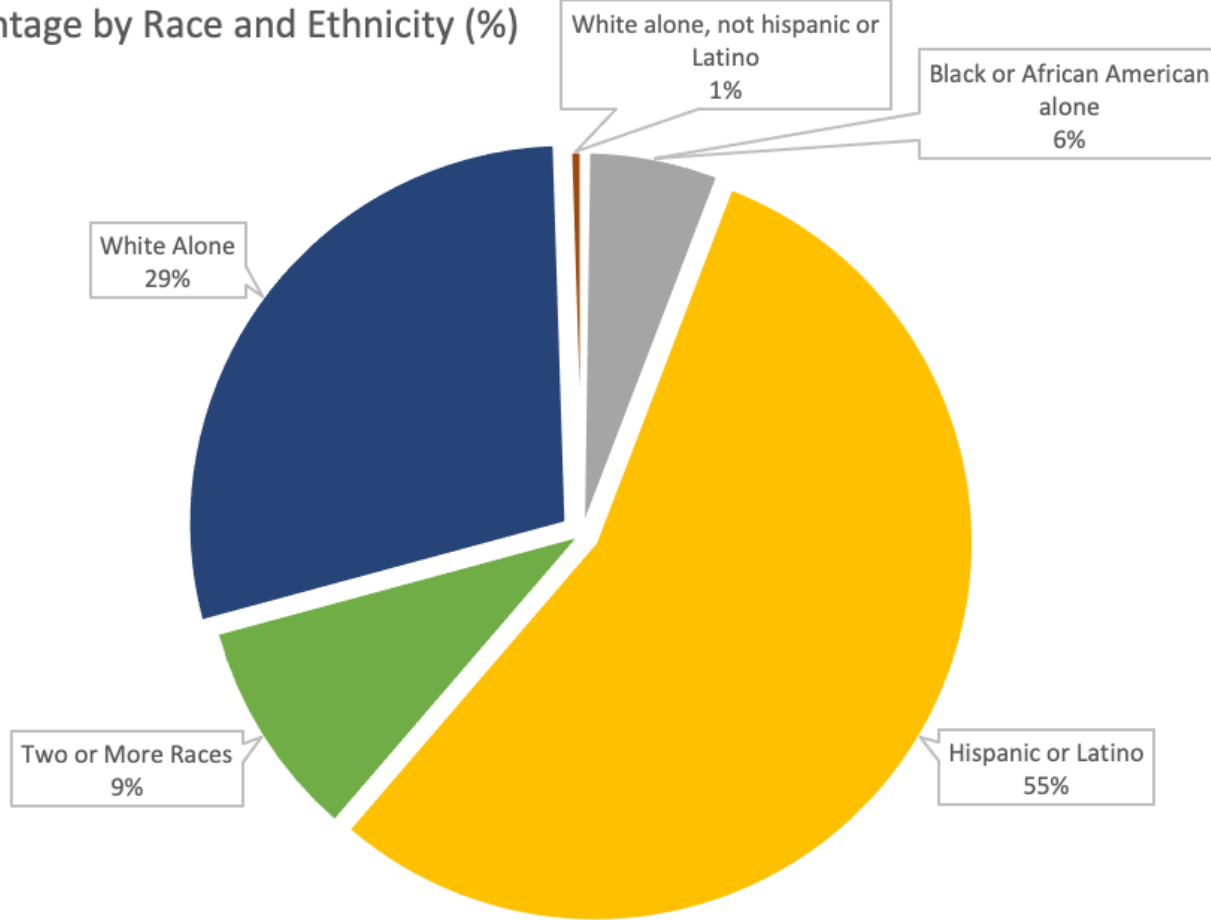
Focus on the historical involvement of United States military operations in Puerto Rico and the impacts that this matter has brought to the island as well as the impacts of tourism towards the island. The research includes the cultural and environmental changes due to the military's stronghold on the island as well as social and long-term economic changes due to tourism on the island.

Demographics

Population: 3.2 million



Population Percentage by Race and Ethnicity (%)



United States Territories



State vs. U.S. Territory Rights

- States
 - Pay all federal taxes
 - U.S. Citizen
 - Subject to all federal laws
 - Full U.S. citizen with all constitutional rights
 - Full voting representation in House of Representatives, Senate, and Electoral College
- U.S. Territories
 - U.S. Citizen
 - Pay some federal taxes
 - Similar government structure, but no meaningful voting representation
 - Have a non-voting representative in the House of Representatives
 - None in Senate, nor Electoral College
 - Cannot vote in Presidential Election

Cultural Influence

Jones Act Sec. 5

First Amendment (1917)

Second Amendment (1918)

Third Amendment (1927)

Fourth Amendment (1934)

Fifth Amendment (1940)

Cultural Influence

"To all Puerto Rican soldiers and veterans, whose contribution to Puerto Rican history and the American experience has been largely ignored"

Harry Franqui-Rivera



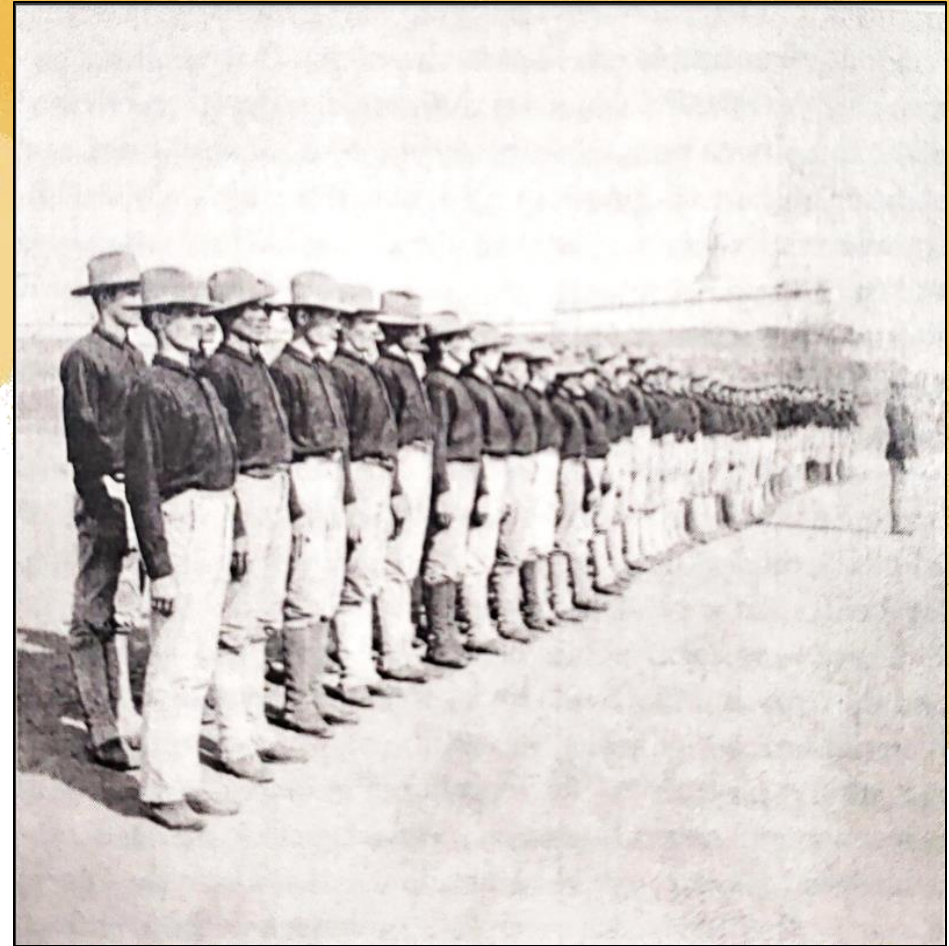
Puerto Rican soldiers serving with the 65th Infantry in Korea holding Puerto Rican flag, Fall 1952

Cultural Influence

Military Involvement

DIRECT

- Puerto Rican's inclusion in the armed forces in 1917 due to Selective Service Act
- World War veterans residing in Puerto Rico in 1947 totaled 70,426 men and 210 women.



"Porto Ricans" in the American Colonial Army in El Morro Castle's parade field.

Cultural Influence

Military Involvement

DIRECT

- Readjustment programs facilitated the effort to change the nature of the island's socio-economic structure.



Learning lathe work in off-duty hours are GI's of Antilles Department 1944-45.
Center of Military History/Army Signal Corps

Cultural Influence

Military Involvement

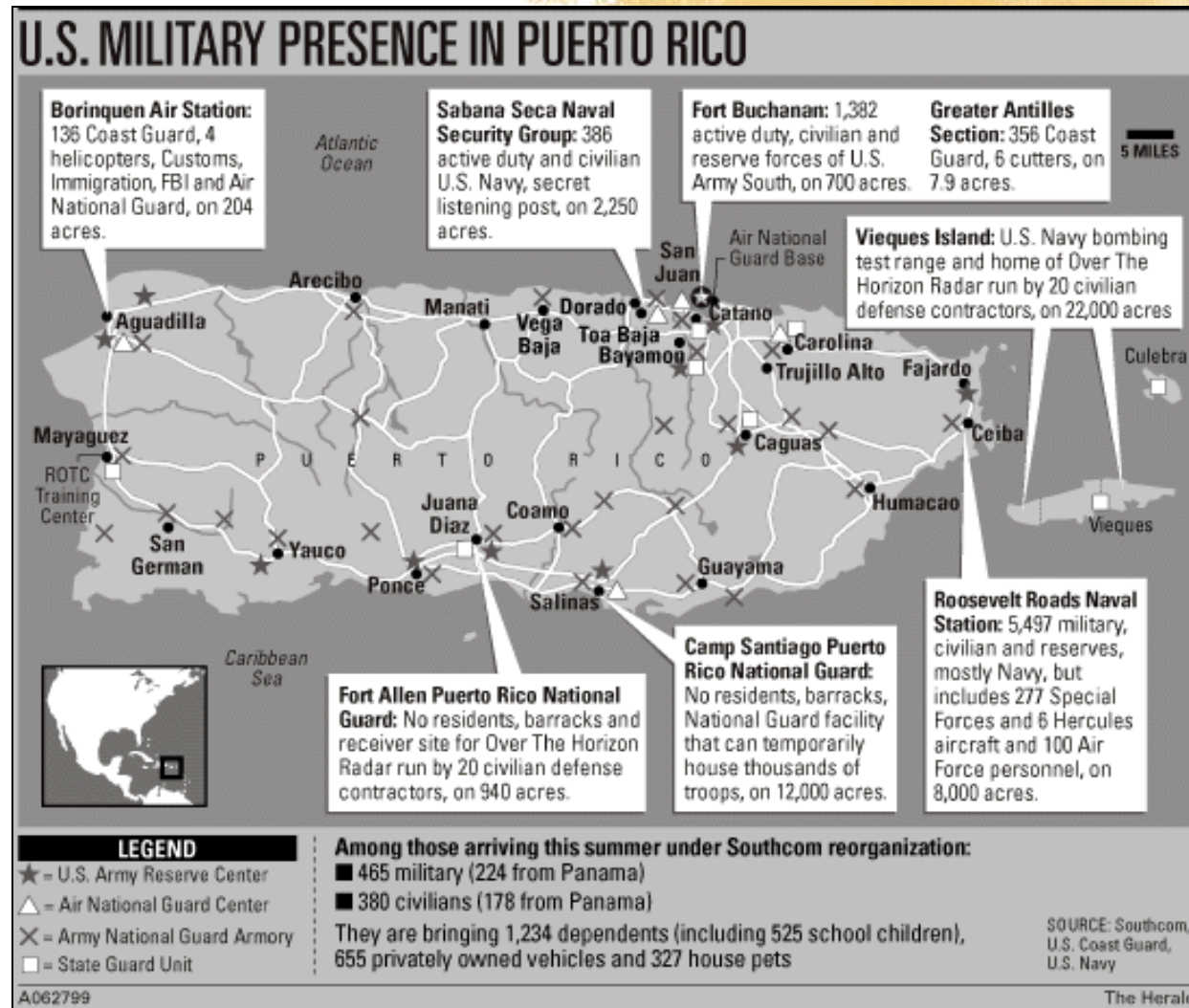
INDIRECT

- Non-military interactions between U.S. Army and civilians during difficulties or catastrophes.



Nov 1941: Soldiers of the 65th Infantry repair phone lines in Caguas, P.R. *Center of Military History/Army Signal Corps*

U.S. Military Bases in Puerto Rico



Vieques Before the Military

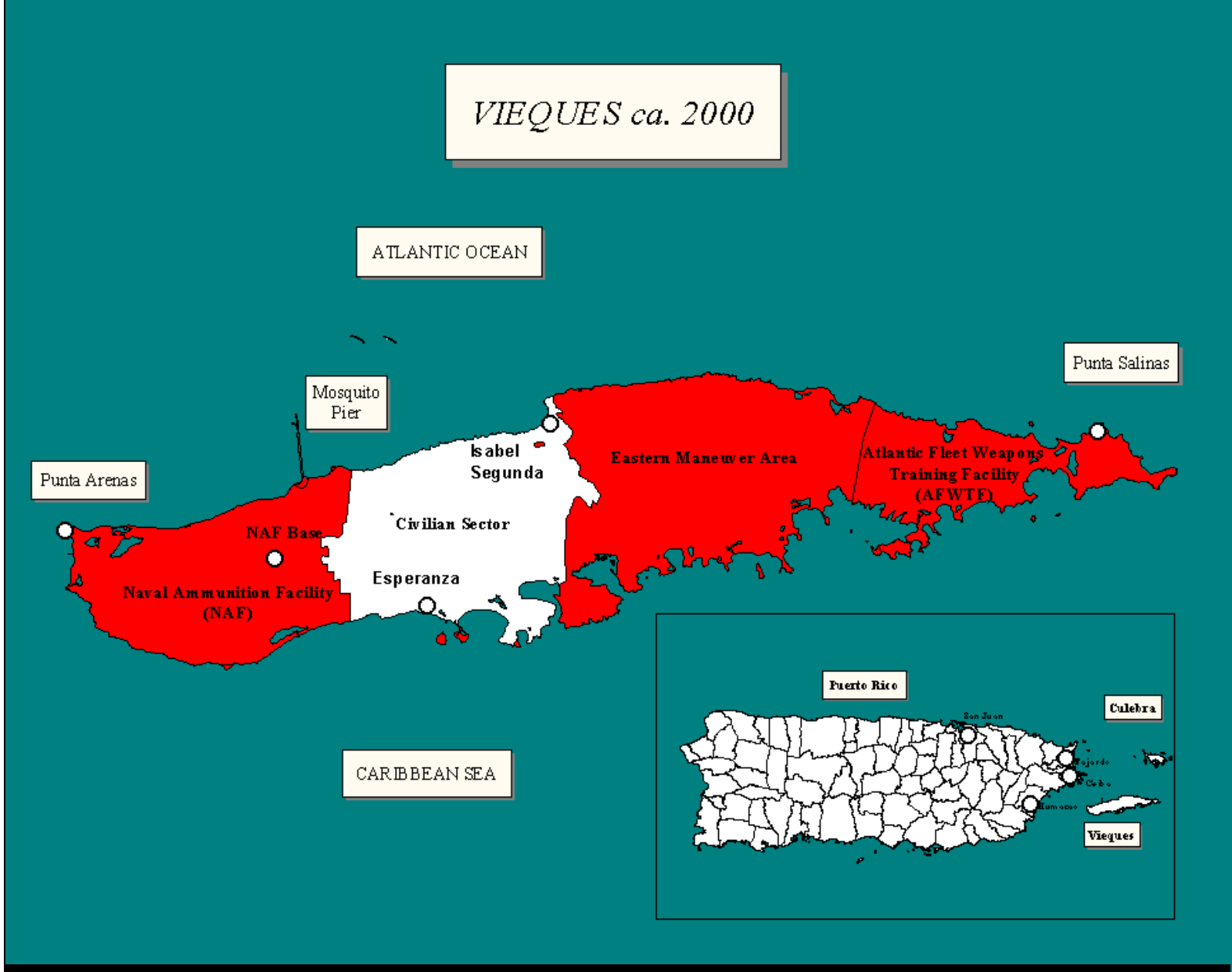
1940's

- Population: 14,000
- Off the eastern coast of P.R.
- Small island, only 52 square miles
- Thriving sugar plantations
 - Known as the 'sugar island'
 - Many farms were smaller and owned by families who had farmed them for generations
- Thriving culture with many local businesses
- Main industries were fishing and tourism
 - Island contained rare Caribbean plants and animals, miles of unspoiled beaches



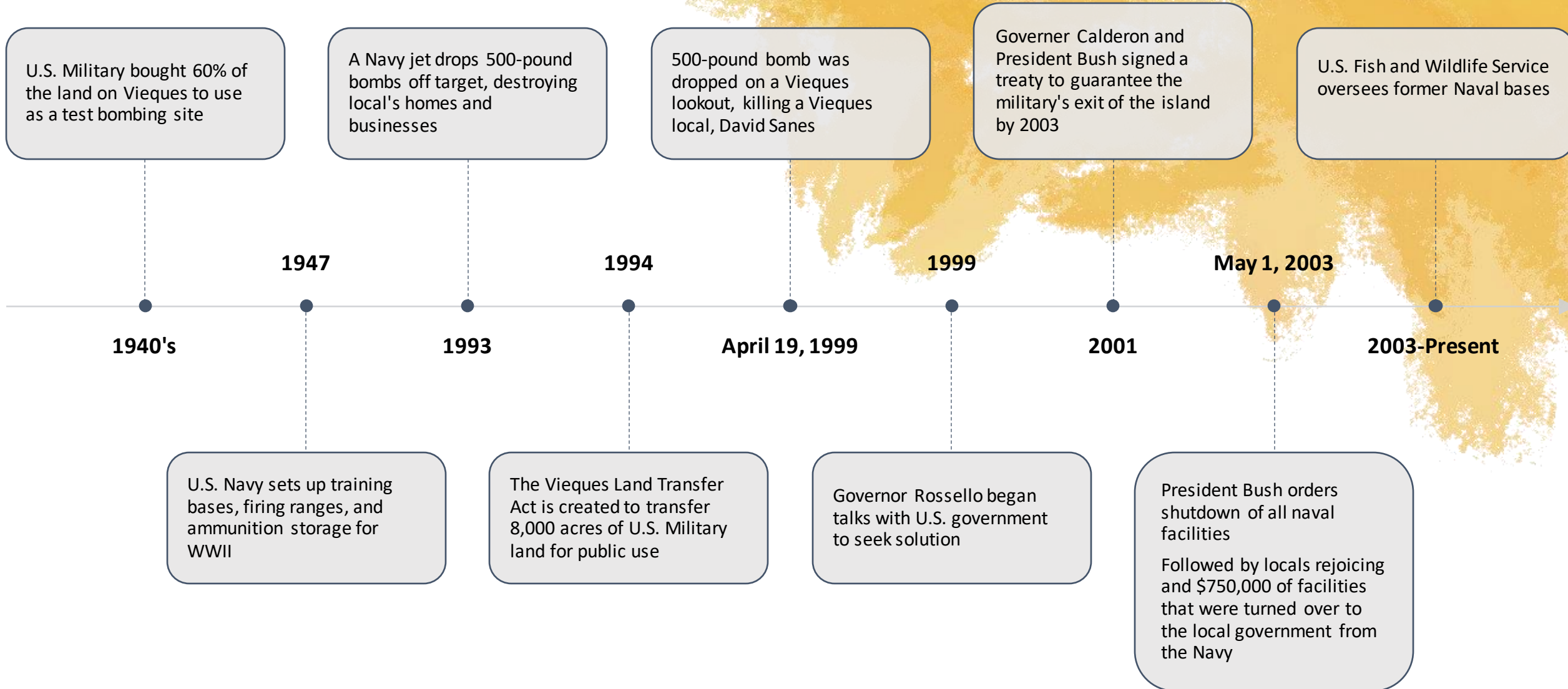
Coat of Arms for Isla de Vieques

VIEQUES ca. 2000



Map of U.S. Navy property, facilities and detonation fields

Timeline of Military Involvement



Forced Exit of Culture and People

- Drastic change of life from before military involvement
- 3,000 Viequenses either left or were resettled by the Navy to the island of St. Croix
 - Often were just given a one-day notice then their house was bulldozed
- Villages Santa Maria and Montesanto were deemed as resettlement areas
- Small landowners were paid small prices for their land
 - Tenant farmers did not have recognized rights to the land, so were not paid
 - Although they had lived and cultivated them for generations
- Navy used Viequenses as cheap labor to construct Naval bases
 - Construction only lasted a year, so many were left without a job or land
- Seven years after the military's invasion of the island, population dropped to 9,000



Sign on Vieques "For our heritage, let's take out the Navy"

Response from the People

The 1999 Vieques Island Protests

- In response to the bomb that killed Sanes
- Most credit this year as the flame that ended up forcing the shutdown of the base
- Reengaged local activism
 - Including Committee to Rescue and Develop Vieques and Crusade for the Rescue of Vieques
- Mobilized civilian protests
- Created national and international insight for what the Naval bases were doing to the island
 - Lasted 4 years of non-violent protests



A soldier posing in front of a bomb with writing "A present for Vieques from Clinton and the U.S. Navy"

Aftermath of Military Bombing Sites

- Bombing destroyed natural landscape, leaving a barren, scrub-filled wasteland with invisible toxins
- Waste that is left to this day, is openly detonated or burnt
 - Often will release more contaminants such as depleted uranium, Agent Orange, napalm and heavy metals



Left over military equipment on Vieques



Burn pit



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2 NAVY ANNEX
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775

5720th REPLY REFER TO
ARAD
990315134018
10 May 1999

Ms. Tara Thornton
The Military Toxics Project
P.O. Box 558
Lewiston, ME 04243-0558

Dear Ms. Thornton:

I am responding to the referral of your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request of February 2, 1999, for information that pertains to U.S. military bases overseas and U.S./NATO training areas. You requested to know what bases/training areas and/or firing ranges overseas have used depleted uranium munitions and/or tanks with armor made depleted uranium, to include the U.S. training area of Grafenwoehr, Germany. Your request was directed to this Headquarters for action as it pertains to the Marine Corps on February 8, 1999.

The locations overseas are Torii Shima (W-176) Island, Okinawa and Live Impact Area (LIA), Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Fees for providing this information have been waived under the current provisions of the FOIA.

Sincerely,

B. L. THOMPSON
Head, Freedom of Information and
Privacy Acts Section
Administration and Resource Management
By direction of the
Commandant of the Marine Corps

Copy of a letter stating that U.S. government knew of contaminations in 1999

Health Effects

- Over a third of the population is suffering from medical diseases
- Depleted uranium munitions
- Cancer in Vieques is 30% higher than in the main island
- Cirrhosis of the liver and kidney failure 381% higher
- Diabetes rates 41% higher
- Lead, arsenic and mercury found in hair samples from 80% of the island's population
- Water/fish contamination

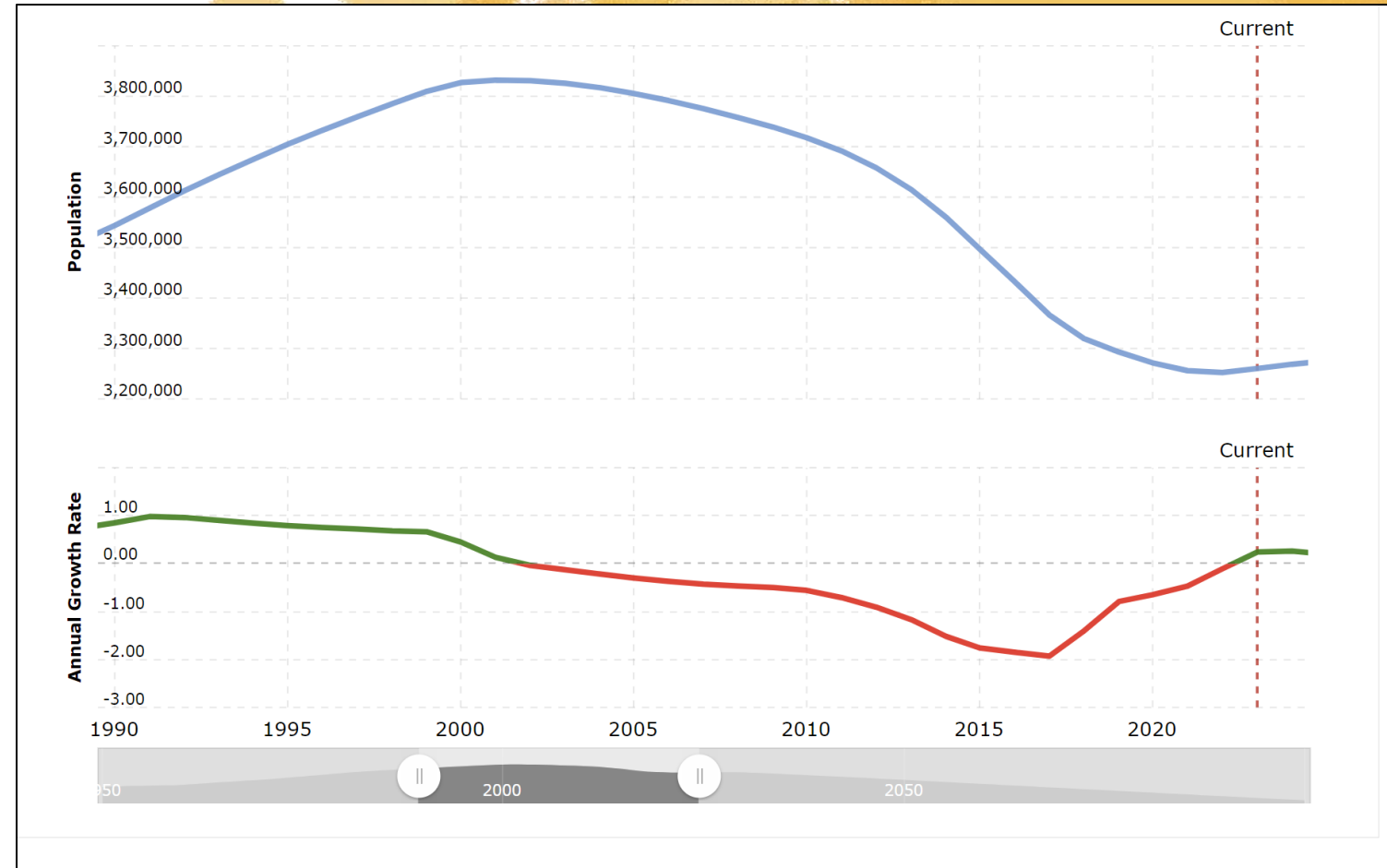


Conclusion of Military

- 7,000 of 9,500 Viequenses sued the U.S. government in 2005 over health problems
 - Courts refused to hear the case, claiming the Navy had sovereign immunity
 - This claim gives the federal government immunity from being sued
- Cleanup efforts plan to continue through 2032 at an additional cost of \$420 million for a total of \$800 million - U.S. Government Accountability Office

Puerto Rico Population Over the Years

- 1990's: Population at steady rate
- 2002: Population decline due to out-migration and low birth rates
- 2008: Great Recession
- 2017: Hurricane Maria
- 2019 – Today: Mass increase in population due to tourism



Effects of Hurricane Maria

- 2017: Category Four hurricane
- 2,900 fatalities
- \$90 billion in damages
- Roads, hospitals, power grids, neighborhoods, schools, water systems, and other critical systems were damaged
- Over 725,000 reported damages to homes
 - Representing 60% of occupied housing units on the island.



Gas station damaged by Hurricane Maria

- Puerto Rico has worked to make its island better over the years. However, the impact of Hurricane Maria made the nation's recovery from that more difficult.

New Construction Developments

- 40% of the island is under construction, due to mass tourism and the impact of Hurricane Maria.
- Tourists/investors add to the island population each year, resulting in the island population increasing.
- New construction includes homes, villas, hotels, businesses, schools, etc.

Construction Cont.

- According to the government, they are merely trying to accommodate the tourism and population growth.
- The natural aspect of the island has suffered due to these constructions.



Coastline Construction

- New construction leads to deforestation
- Coastal lines are now becoming new construction sites resulting in
 - Deforestation of trees on the coastal lines
 - Destruction of Wetlands
 - Coastal Hazards
 - Landslides



Coastline construction resulting in deforestation of trees on coastal lines

Ecological Impacts

- Natural features like the beach, dunes, barriers, trees, etc., are starting to have an ecological impact on the island.
- Continuous erosion and flooding are taking place.
- Due to Puerto Rico's coastline's deforestation, mangrove trees have also suffered.



Mangrove Forest

How has this affected the people of Puerto Rico?

- By law, every beach in Puerto Rico must have public access.
- “Party protests” in areas threatened by overdevelopment, anchored by the slogan “Las playas son del pueblo,” or “The beaches belong to the people.”
- Public beaches cannot be turned into private beaches. Locals feel as if they're being pushed out of their own homes.
- "Locals and climate activists battle against coastal development and privatization of public beaches as luxury condos proliferate."
- Activists are still expressing their concern over the construction's effect on the area.



People gather to sing and play music during a party protest at Los Almendros beach

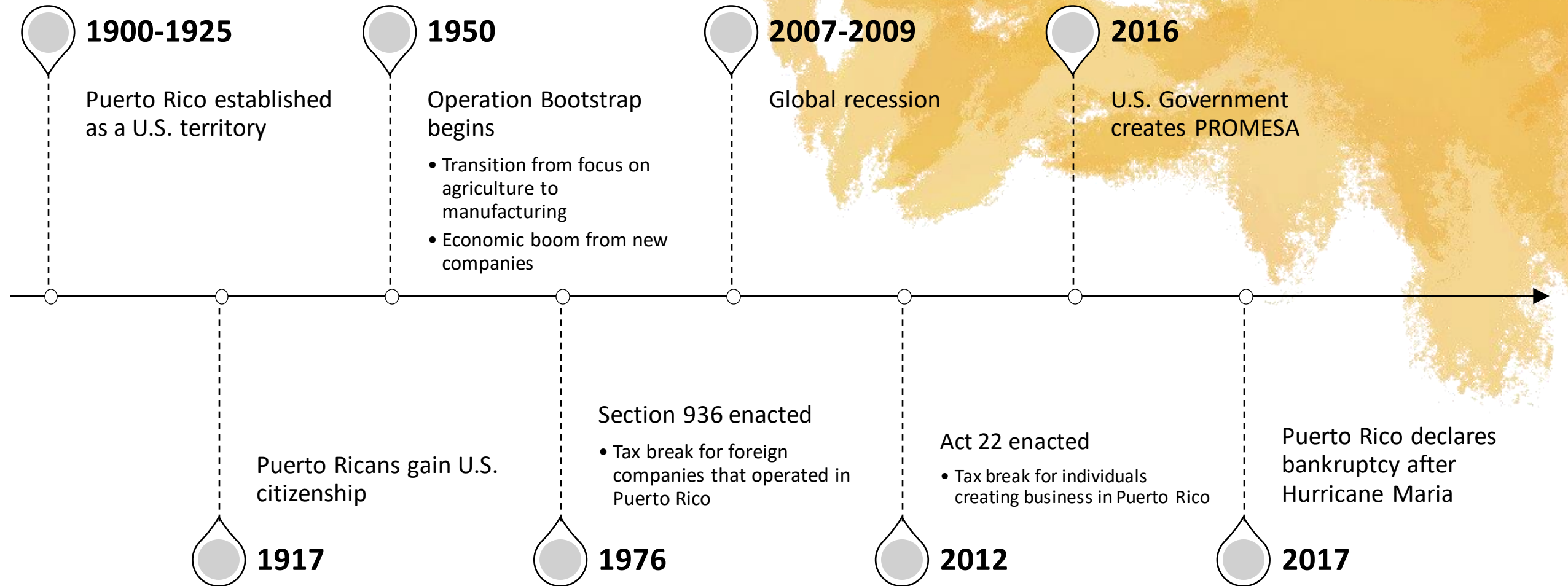


Graffiti in Spanish that reads, "This wall is illegal", written on a partially destroyed wall along Los Almendros beach

Government Response to the Protest

- The law is on the citizen side of Puerto Rico.
- "A lower court in Puerto Rico ruled in favor of demolishing some structures this year, but the owners have repeatedly appealed the court's decision."
- Permits are still being granted by the government to start new construction on the coastal line.
- The government believes they are doing what's best for the island, so they have continued to prioritize development.
- "Some environmentalists say the island's government is endangering the lives of people by greenlighting construction projects in geologically vulnerable areas."

Timeline of Government in Puerto Rico

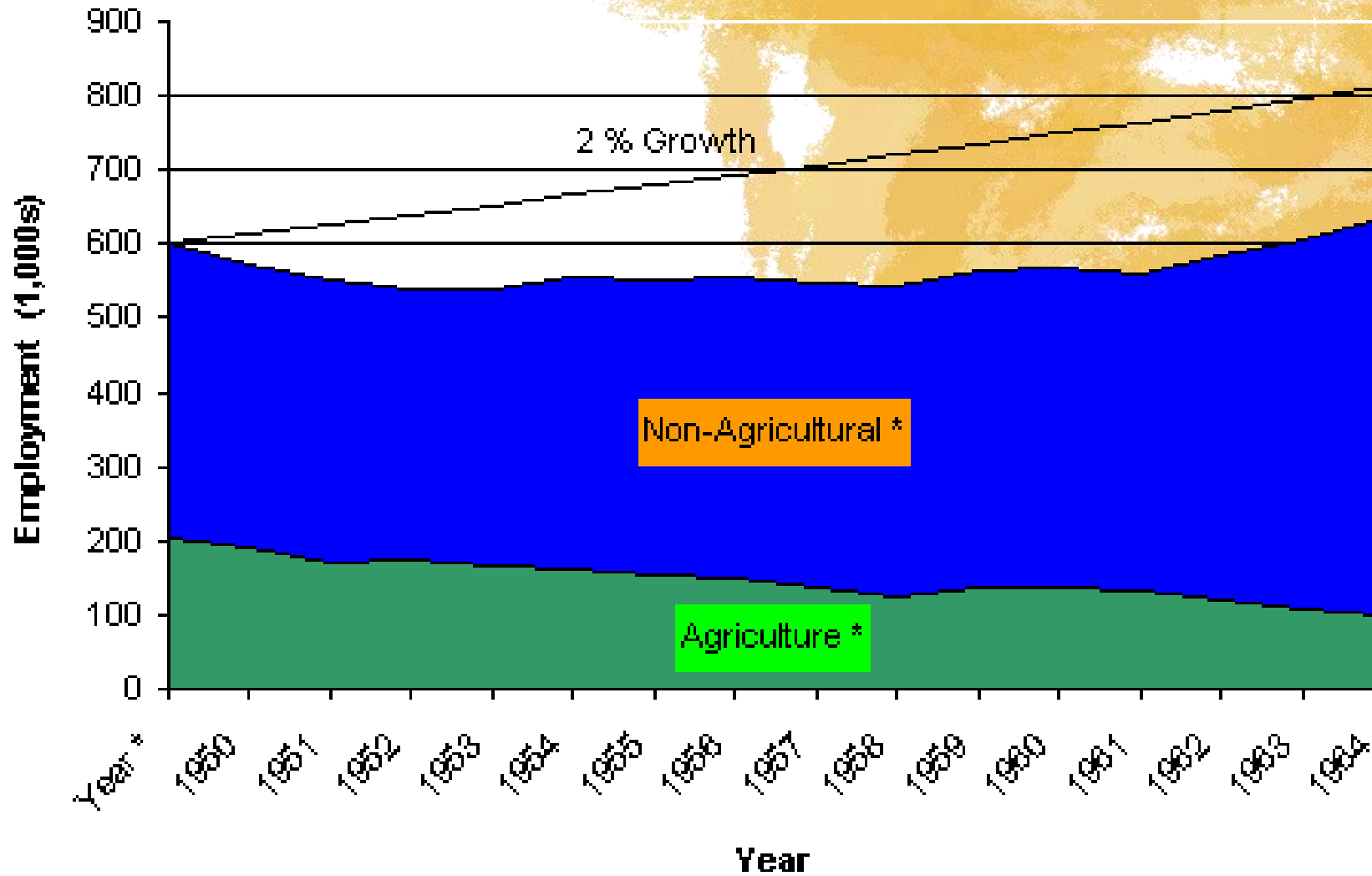


Economic Impact

Operation Bootstrap

- 1950: initiation of Operation Bootstrap
- Governor Muñoz Marín switched Puerto Rico's industry
 - Agriculture --> Import and Export
- Tax breaks for companies using Puerto Rico for manufacturing & export
- \$621 million produced for island

Employment in Puerto Rico, 1950-1965



Graph of employment numbers in Puerto Rico following industry shift

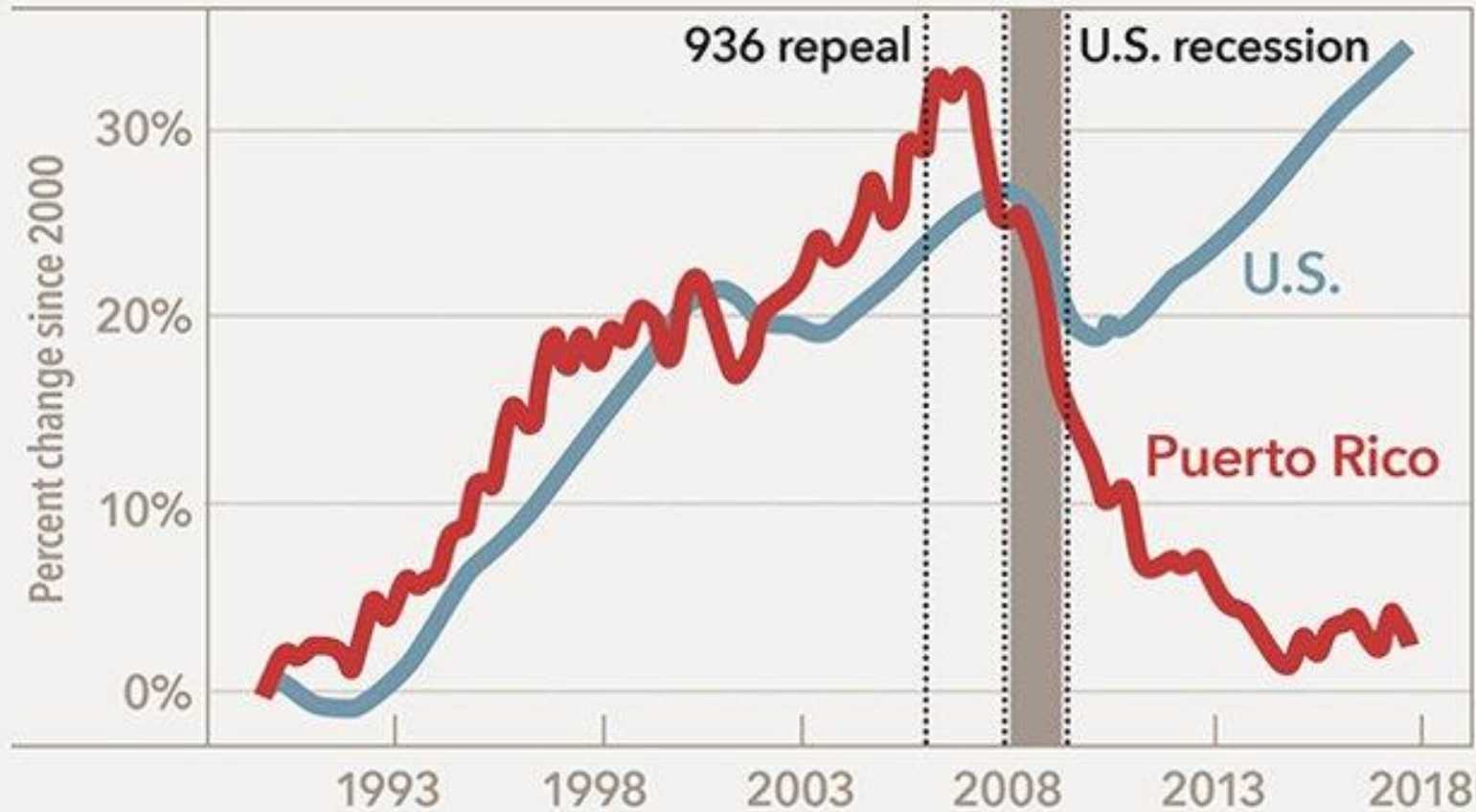
Economic Impact

Section 936

- 1976: initiation of Section 936
- Tax break allowed for US companies that operated in Puerto Rico
- No taxes on revenue made in Puerto Rico
- 1996: 10-year repeal started by President Bill Clinton
- Deep recession due to reliance of manufacturing and production of goods on US companies

A shrinking economy

Job losses



NOTE: Between 1990 and 2007, Puerto Rico's economy added jobs at roughly the same pace as the rest of the U.S. But its economy began shrinking shortly after the repeal of a tax break for corporations known as Section 936.

Economic Impact

Act 22 "Individual Investors Act"

- 2012: initiation of Act 22
- Individuals who relocate to Puerto Rico are 100% exempt from taxes
 - Only pay federal income taxes on money made outside of the island
- Intent was to drive business and wealth to the island
- Backlash for driving Puerto Ricans out



Logan Paul, influencer, net worth: \$45 million



Giovanni Feroce, retired Rhode Island senator

Economic Impact

PROMESA

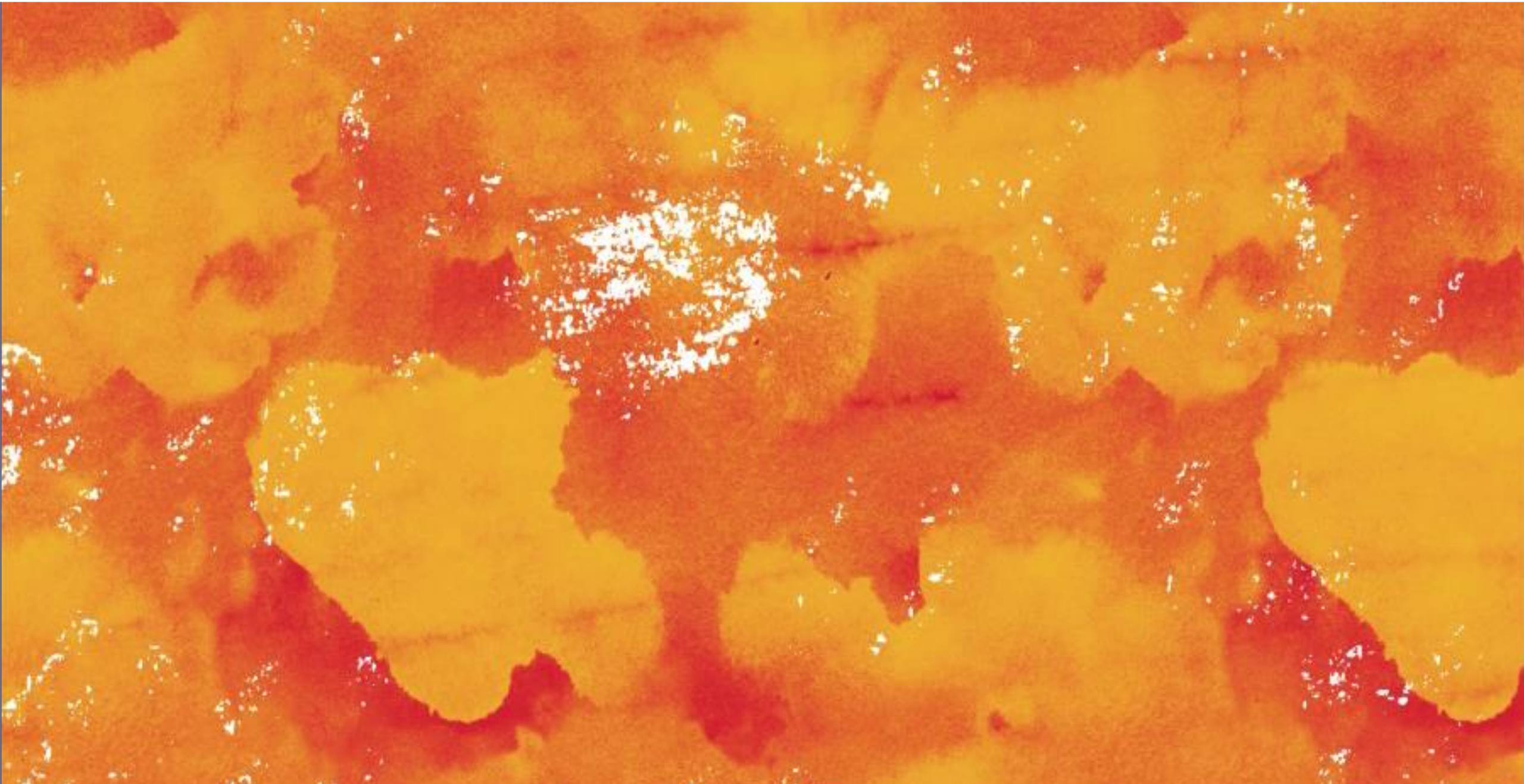
- 2016: initiation of PROMESA
 - *Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act*
- Allowed the U.S. to create plan for economic repair
- PROMESA board
- Restructure debt payment plan
- Reduce Puerto Rico's debt from \$33 billion to \$7.4 billion
- Reduce annual payments from \$4 billion to \$1 billion

Conclusion

The United States has always had an impact on Puerto Rico, both negatively and positively, in many areas, from the military to the economy. We, as a group, wanted to keep an open mind about the ways that all areas touched on in this presentation affect Puerto Rico and its people. We agree that Puerto Rico has been taken advantage of for its resources and location at the cost of the people and their culture. Furthermore, these circumstances and history should not be ignored despite the normalization of racism.

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ISCORE

IOWA STATE CONFERENCE
ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

