

Puerto Ricans come to Bethlehem (again)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Fun Stuff, Local Color September 19, 2019

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October 4-13

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They came from Puerto Rico to Pa. after Hurricane Maria

We owe this interesting article to Councilwoman Olga Negrón, whom followers will remember did a recent Bethlehem Moment, “[Puerto Ricans come to Bethlehem.](#)”

They are coming again, but as CW Negrón says, now things are different.



- To be sure, Puerto Rico residents have been relocating to Pennsylvania for decades, lured here by jobs in the steel mills, farms and factories. But the migration pattern in the wake of Hurricane Maria has been noticeably different.
- Not everyone who has left the financially troubled island has needed social or public assistance. These days, a

substantial number of new arrivals from Puerto Rico are prepared to pivot directly into jobs, professions or college. “This migration is very different than any other before,” said Olga Negrón, a member of the Bethlehem City Council and the Latino Leadership Alliance of the Lehigh Valley. “Many of them are bilingual. They have professions or a level of education capacity to get higher paying jobs. They were ready to work. Ready to interview and get a job.”

- Two years ago, Negrón, herself a Puerto Rico native, helped spearhead a grassroots effort to assist hurricane refugees find homes, schools and whatever public services they needed in the Lehigh Valley, which became a major destination for hurricane refugees. She found that a substantial number needed little assistance. “We are seeing a lot more at the professional level than we were used to in the last few years, maybe it’s because the influx has been going on for so long,” Negrón said.

CW Negrón’s “Moment” awakened an interest in Gadfly to know more about local Puerto Rican *historia*, and didn’t Gadfly librarian and HomeworkGiver Tony Hanna send him a reference to a book precisely on that subject precisely at that time.

The space for the next Bethlehem Moment is now unexpectedly open, so Gadfly’s going to try to do another moment of Puerto Rican local history with its aid for next Council meeting.

Hmm, Gadfly is also curious about Portuguese in Bethlehem. In old news stories Gadfly has seen political meetings held at the Portuguese Club, and we still have one, don’t we? Gadfly wonders about the Bethlehem-Portuguese connection. Anyone help?

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