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Abstract
No Se Vende (Not for Sale) is a grassroots campaign that claims that Puerto Ricans, even those who are renters, are the legitimate owners of Humboldt Park, Chicago. In this assertion, legitimacy and ownership are one and the same, regardless of the legal status of "homeowner". No Se Vende then contradicts the original meaning that inspired the legal code, property that can be bought and sold which is not based on "use" values. Legality, to some extent, has lost its legitimacy in the eyes of these activists and, therefore, they have decided to claim their rights thought the symbology of language. In this sense, the idea of Puerto Ricans renting in Humboldt Park or simply deciding to stay has become an instrumental right of resistance to the perceived oppression. The campaign has played a key role in the construction of a new sense of legitimacy in the recent housing struggles after the financial housing crisis. This paper employs a single case study through participant observation, ethnography, and Participatory Action Research (PAR).
Keywords: renters; owners; gentrification; Puerto Ricans; Chicago; activism; No Se Vende campaign

Resumen
No Se Vende es una campaña popular que afirma que los puertorriqueños, incluso aquellos que son arrendatarios, son los legítimos propietarios de Humboldt Park, Chicago. Con esta afirmación, la legitimidad y la propiedad son lo mismo, independientemente del estado legal de ser "propietario de una casa". *No Se Vende* contradice el significado original que inspiró el código legal, propiedad que se puede comprar y vender que no se basa en valores de "uso". La legalidad, hasta cierto punto, ha perdido su legitimidad a los ojos de estos activistas que, por lo tanto, han decidido reclamar sus derechos a través de la simbología del lenguaje. En este sentido, la idea de que los puertorriqueños alquilen en Humboldt Park o simplemente decidan quedarse se ha convertido en un derecho instrumental de resistencia a la opresión percibida. La campaña ha jugado un papel clave en la construcción de un nuevo sentido de legitimidad en las recientes luchas por la vivienda después de la crisis financiera de la casa. Este documento emplea un estudio de caso único a través de la observación participante, la etnografía y la Investigación-Acción Participativa (IAP).
Palabras clave: arrendatarios; propietarios; gentrificación; Puertorriqueños; Chicago; activismo; campaña popular No Se Vende campaign

No Se Vende (Not for sale). An anti-gentrification grassroots campaign of Puerto Ricans in Chicago

Ivis García
The University of Utah

Introduction

I write this introduction sitting on an airplane on my way to Chicago from Salt Lake City, where I am employed as an Assistant Professor. I am going "home" to participate in a panel discussion titled, "Community Building: Hope and Home in Humboldt Park". Along with hundreds of people in the Puerto Rican community, I will be celebrating the life-work of my mentor, José López. It is his 70th birthday and what a better way to celebrate than with a two-day symposium and dinner gala to raise funds for the Puerto Rican Cultural Center – the organization that created the No Se Vende (Not for Sale) campaign.

As I sit on the air, conquering distance, I reflect on the meaning of home. People say that home is where the heart is. And, my heart, still in my ways in Chicago. This is not because it is a great city, which it is, but because this is where I found a sense of belonging and a family far away from home (Puerto Rico). The people in the Puerto Rican Agenda – a collective of organizations which I co-chaired while pursuing my doctorate in urban planning – are not my blood family, but they have adopted me for almost a decade now. While completing my dissertation, where this work largely derives, they taught me to be an activist, to build community and to instill hope through action (Garcia 2015).

It was in the context of Participatory Action Research (PAR) that I learned about the life and housing histories of my new family. My mentor José López and many other community leaders that I can come to admire regurgitated to the same beat the story of how Puerto Ricans started to move to Chicago in mass in the 1950s and they first settle in

Old Town, Lakeview, and Lincoln Park (Flores-González 2001; Alicea 2001; Rúa 2012; Betancur 2002). The story continue to evolved when in the 1960s they started to be displaced to Humboldt Park – along Division Street and between Western and California Avenues – as a result of urban renewal projects (Flores-Gonzalez 2001; Betancur 2002).

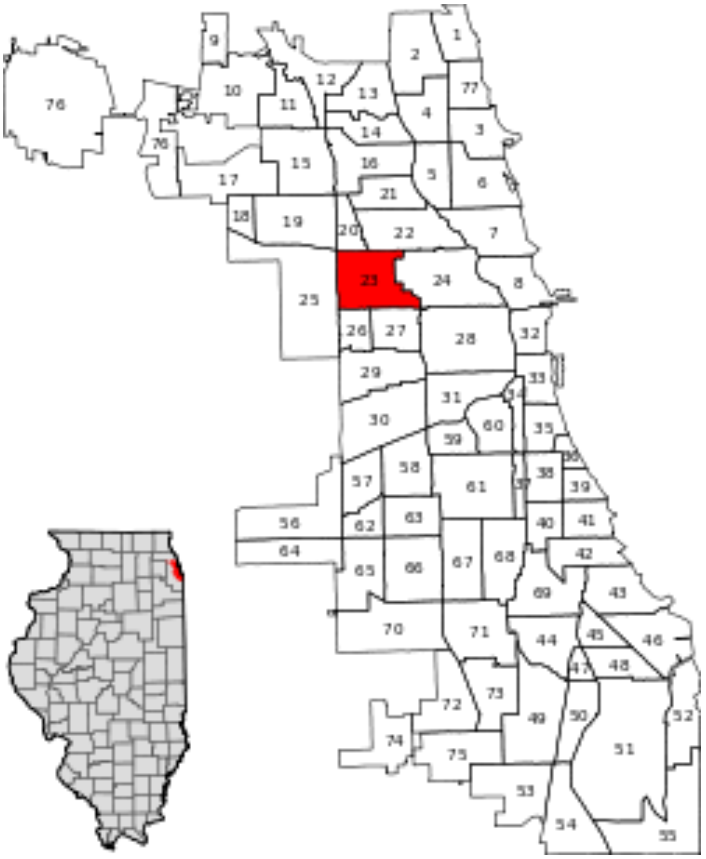

Figure 1. Map of the Humboldt Park community area (right) and map showing where Chicago is located in relationship to the state of Illinois (left).

But members of the Puerto Rican Agenda, including José López, the executive director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, came up with a plan to deter gentrification and in 1995 they erected two giant flags of steel (see figure 5) marking the entrance and exit of Paseo Boricua, a commercial corridor housing restaurants and non-profit establishments that represent the Puerto Rican identity (Flores-Gonzalez 2001; García 2015; 2017). It has been more than two decades of community building between two flags. Finally, in 2018 this space was officially recognized by the City of Chicago as Puerto Rican Town, a special zoning district with future funds attach to cultural production, giving it a historical and protected space in the city (García 2019a). Although, 23 years apart, both the creation of Paseo Boricua in 1995 and the legal designation of Puerto Rico Town in 2018 are examples of community efforts to stop the gentrification coming westward and to declare ownership over space (García 2017). Most specifically, I concentrate in the No Se Vende Campaign because it is a clear example of what Mumm called a public struggle over gentrification (Mumm 2014; Mumm 2016).

This article focuses on Chicago's Puerto Rican community in Humboldt Park and seeks to illuminate the disparities between market-types and the opposing views of economy, private property, and ownership. In the case of Puerto Ricans in Humboldt Park, Chicago and the No Se Vende (Not for Sale) Campaign, this work seeks to develop on behalf of the community a framework from which to further leverage identity politics into creating symbolic forms of ownership that transcend the state's enforcement of private property rights.

This article is divided into six distinct sections. In the first section (theoretical framework), I frame the conversation in political economy and thinkers like Jean-Michel Servet, Caroline Humphrey, David Harvey, Karl Polanyi, Fernand Braudel, and David Graeber. While a full exploration of any of the topics of commodification, market-economy, economism, use values and exchange values are impossible within the confines of this work, this article seeks to start a dialogue from which we may begin to seek out alternatives to the dominant thought of private/individual property. The following sections, two and three, will

discuss the No Se Vende Campaign before (older mobilizations/struggles) and after the 2008 crisis (newer mobilizations/struggles). Sections four and five, focus in two changes seen in the market after the crisis: market formalization and de-localization (section four) and, the inability of Puerto Ricans to afford homes after the financial crisis because they still are not affordable to them and because they must compete with others for the same housing stock (section five). Finally, in section six, I offer some concluding remarks.

Methods

In order to understand how Puerto Ricans have come to relate to and build on their community's specific economic traditions I took part as an activist, ethnographer, and participant observer in meetings and every day conversations in the case study area. As an ethnographer I studied the Puerto Rican nation, culture, and identity formation in Humboldt Park (Rua 2011). Through the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, I was part of conversations and anti-gentrification actions that sought to benefit my community (Chevalier and Buckles 2019).

I conducted interviews with more than two dozen community members. However, this article focuses in community stories as told by Julia – a community organizer for the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC). The PRCC was founded in 1972 and it is a non-profit, community-based organization that seeks to serve the social and cultural needs of Chicago's Puerto Rican community in the Humboldt Park area. The No Se Vende Campaign is one of PRCC's initiatives. All of PRCC programs are based on the principles of self-determination, self-actualization, critical thought, and an ethic of self-reliance best expressed in the motto "To live and help to live" (Molina 2019).

I met Julia at a Puerto Rican Agenda meeting. The Puerto Rican Agenda is a collective of more than a 150 organizations and Puerto Rican leaders that organize in Humboldt Park around several community issues, the most important on being gentrification (The Puerto Rican Agenda of Chicago 2019). At the time, I was the co-chair of the

organization. She came to promote some of the work she was doing related to gentrification and renter stabilization via Bohío Housing in where the PRCC would pay people rent during times of emergency (e.g. someone got sick, lost their job etc.). After a few times of seeing her in the community, I thought her perspective was very unique, so I decided to interview her. We also talked informally half dozen times about the community, life and so on. Through these conversations I noticed that people share stories with her; stories of being evicted, foreclosed, and displaced. I saw her doing her work, taking to people and organizing community. She walks the neighborhood and knows every door, gets to know the people and understand her struggles not as individuals (psychologically), but as a community (sociologically). I center this article on her not only as a way of giving continuity to the story, but also to shine light on community organizers around the world and the work they do.

Julia stories show how Puerto Ricans interact with and contest the impositions – real or perceived – of other groups' economic ideals into the spaces to which they are attached as homeowners, tenants, and community members. I maintain that the narratives used by community stakeholders like Julia are the primary way in which they attempt to reconcile themselves in the spaces and times they inhabit. Ultimately, I seek to understand how these narratives are transformed into political objectives and institutions such as No Se Vende and Bohío Housing Services from the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, which are capable of expressing a way of maintaining Puerto Ricans in the space they currently occupy.

In line with traditional PAR methodologies (Chevalier and Buckles 2019), the intention of this article is to contribute to the construction of a philosophy of praxis which might be useful to the Humboldt Park community and other communities struggling with similar issues. Trapped in ethnic/racial enclaves, with little chance of achieving the economic status of whites and after suffering the detrimental effects of the subprime mortgage and housing crisis, minorities throughout the country are under the increasing pressures of gentrification and

displacement. Humboldt Park specifically was ranked by Redfin as among the "Top Ten 2014 U.S. Hottest Neighborhoods"(Unger 2014). It is becoming increasingly important for minorities to develop innovative ways of maintaining the urban spaces they inhabit. This case study aims to shed light on social experimentation undertaken by community activists while theorizing potential pathways to strengthen their endeavors.

Theoretical Framework

No Se Vende (Not for Sale) embodies a narrative that questions traditional notions of individual ownership. While those who subscribe to classical economics (e.g. Smith, Turgot, Beccaria etc.) argue that since cave men times people truck, barter, and trade, thinkers like Servet, Humphrey, Harvey, Polanyi, Braudel, and Graeber have questioned this presumption. These critical theorists have sought to debunk the idea that barter and its progression towards the creation of money is a natural phenomenon that has existed since humans have.

Instead, they have argued, alongside with Marcel Mauss, that historically people practice gift-giving (Mauss 2000). The conceptualization of gift-giving challenges individual ownership as an establishment and instead opens the door for discussions of collective ownership which are bounded by identity, community, and sense of belonging. No Se Vende is a way of saying that neighborhood (place) and community (people) are one and that as long as there are Puerto Ricans in Humboldt Park who consider this place home, the space is owned by them, even if they are renters. The following theoretical framework seeks to aid the understanding that private property is not natural but a historical phenomenon that it is constantly questioned in Humboldt Park as part of the Puerto Rican everyday experience (García 2017; García 2018a).

The basic question of critical theorists, a perspective I subscribe to, is how did we get here? (García 2018b; García 2019b). We have to go back for centuries and find the texts in where historians and anthropologists

have debated over the existence of barter in primitive societies and the properties of human methods for exchange as an element of human nature in order to answer this question. Contemporary articulations of this argument are most often based on Adam Smith's assumption that the "propensity to truck, barter and exchange" represented a basic and fundamental element of human interaction (Smith 2003). Jean-Michel Servet (1981) satirized the reductive position of the early political economists:

> In the eighteenth century, Smith, Turgot, Beccaria and so on, invented 'barter', an essential theoretical construct for the description of the functioning of a society in the absence of money, that instrument of princely control. A savage met by chance another savage; both carried goods capable of satisfying the needs of the other: one was hungry and held an animal skin he didn't know what to do with, the other was cold and held what was left over from an abundant fishing expedition. From this first contact, this first 'transaction', stemmed not only 'commerce' but, another form and another sense for the word: language. (Servet 1981: 423).

The logic of the political economists is quite simple: given that the resources available in nature are scarce and given that the amount of demand for those resources is always certain to overwhelm those resources, communities and societies have to, by some mechanism, allocate the products of their work among their members. Early political economists assumed that market exchange is the natural method from which systems of distribution arise. In 'primitive' societies and communities, we are told, exchange was mediated by participants' want for each other's wares but, prior to the invention of money, exchange could only occur if each party had something the other wanted. If one party sought to exchange with another but had nothing they wanted in return, bartering became difficult if not impossible. We can thusly see the impetus for the invention of money and, in turn, we can properly see that all social development is tantamount to the development of markets.

While the logic of this story is both elegant and intuitively appealing, anthropologists and historians studying economies have long refuted this belief in a natural state of market exchange – represented in its most 'primitive' form, we are told, as a barter economy. As Caroline Humphrey (1985) has written, "No example of a barter economy, pure and simple, has ever been described, let alone the emergence from it of money; all available ethnography suggests that there never has been such a thing" (Humphrey 1985: 48). While the question of naturally existing exchange is an interesting one, arguments surrounding the origins of trade often degrade into little more than semantic debates. Meanwhile, orthodox economists have not seemed to be interested in defending their position on the existence of markets and exchange – they simply ignore the counter-arguments altogether. The idea of the naturalness of exchange appears to be so deeply embedded in the modern imaginary that no amount of refutation will dislodge it. Indeed, the entire field of orthodox economics leans on unproven assumptions (Harvey 1978).

While acknowledging the existence of these debates, I do not see the need not engage in them any further. Whether exchange was constituted by reciprocity or gift-giving and therefore whether or not the idea of naturally existing barter ever existed, buries the lead. The important question is not the existence of exchange as a natural human function, the question is: *When did markets become central to the reproduction of whole societies?* The important difference between older systems of economy and modern ones does not lie in the existence or depth of exchange; rather, it lies in the degree of reliance by members of a society on the marketplace for securing the goods needed for their everyday reproduction.

Contrary to popular depictions, this analysis operates on the basic assumption that, although populations subsisted in the forms of households and communities up to a short time ago, members of societies have, of late, become increasingly dependent on market interactions for even the most basic acts of reproduction. Though families and communities likely exchanged the products of their labor – perhaps even in great numbers and across great distances – their

exchange was always constituted by the surpluses of their product and not by the goods necessitated for their daily reproduction. It is the degree of reliance on market economy for reproduction that has piqued my interest here as well as the origin of such reliance. To elaborate on this distinction, as Karl Polanyi wrote:

> No society could, naturally, live for any length of time unless it possessed an economy of some sort; but previously to our time no economy has ever existed that, even in principle, was controlled by markets. In spite of the chorus of academic incantations so persistent in the nineteenth century, gain and profit made on exchange never before played an important part in human economy. Though the institution of the market was fairly common since the later Stone Age, its role was no more than incidental to economic life […]. While history and ethnography know of various kinds of economies, most of them comprising the institution of markets, they know of no economy prior to our own, even approximately controlled and regulated by markets (Polanyi 2001: 43).

Adam Smith and his cohorts falsely concluded that since exchange in some form appears to be natural and since the need to economize one's time is tautologically true, that the reliance on the market for subsistence was similarly natural. But market economies were never the result of spontaneous outcroppings of human nature. The works of 19th century historians like Karl Polanyi and Fernand Braudel, and 21st century anthropologists like David Graeber have, to my mind, effectively documented a concise and systemic refutation to the economist's claims of naturally existing market economy (Polanyi 2001; Graeber 2014; Braudel 1985). This article operates on the basic premise that this issue has been effectively addressed, even if economists remain ignorant of or adamant about such a resolution. I will not be seeking here to rehash the problems of economic analysis built around these flawed premises, but to reconstruct the experience of Puerto Ricans living in Chicago while dislodging the economism which plague modern developmental strategies.

The idea of markets being natural manifest itself clearly in housing. We have come to believe that homes can only be commodities, but this is only a historic phenomenon (Harvey 1978; García 2019b; Marcuse and Madden 2016). Presently exchange values have become more important that use values (Harvey 1978). In cities today, from New York, to London to Chicago, we can see clearly the manifestations of homes being treated as commodities. Take for example, segregation and how homes values are dependent on the skin color of who lives in the area (García 2019c). We might also point to gentrification and how prices go up as lower income (often people of color) are force to move out of the neighborhood because they cannot longer pay the rising prices in housing but also new amenities, including restaurants, supermarkets and so on (Betancur 2002; Allison 2005; Anguelovski 2015; García 2015). Older adults and long term residents are often among the most affected as the neighborhood changes (García and Rúa 2018). The next section will discuss the emergence of the No Se Vende Campaign as a method to combat gentrification and displacement. The information below comes from informal conversations as a participant observer as well as formal interviews.

No Se Vende before the 2008 housing crisis

I learned at different points in time and through various community members in formal and informal conversations that since 2004 many young Puerto Ricans have been resisting gentrification through the "Humboldt Park No Se Vende" (Don't Sell Humboldt Park) Campaign. Alejandro Molina, who worked for PRCC and participated from the No Se Vende Campaign expressed,

> Since 2004, our efforts are geared at challenging gentrification and preventing displacement of Chicago's oldest Puerto Rican community. We hope to engaged residents in a serious dialogue meant to insert longtime residents into the process of building the future of Humboldt Park.

The youth at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) came up with the idea for this campaign which was part of an overall plan to radically change the community. The plan went from electoral politics (going door to door to register voters and electing a Puerto Rican Alderman), to grassroots community organizing (going door to door to discussing the issue of gentrification). A primary understanding of this manifesto was the concept of democracy, that community members should take part in the political process and elect politicians like Billy Ocasio, former Alderman of the 26th Ward. Billy was an ally of the Puerto Rican community he became famous for on the one hand, negotiating with developers to build affordable housing units or on the other hand, downzone whole areas so dense and expensive condos could not be build (García 2015). With that idea, young people started going out and knocking on doors.

At the time, Billy Ocasio, a democrat, was the alderman of the 26th Ward where Humboldt Park is located. These young organizers would make the voices of the community heard at the Alderman's office. Organizers would use a survey request forms to write down the concerns of residents in the area. For example, if someone needed a tree to be cut down or some trash to be picked up, PRCC's organizers would fill out a form and then drop it by the Alderman's office. In this way, the campaign was able to secure all community members city services through the Alderman's office. PRCC's youth also engaged in other initiatives; for example, they would help people find an apartment, fill out the appropriate forms, and so on. Organizers would also gather other information and leave reading material for residents to learn about various programs and opportunities sponsored by the city, non-profit and religious organizations.

Although the campaign started with a fairly simple system, going door to door, organizers evolved their strategy over time. For example, they appointed captains divided by precincts. Activists were out in the streets seven days a week and covered a lot of ground. Neighbors and residents were accustomed to seeing the same organizer over and over

Figure 2. Youth community organizer holding a sign at a manifestation after a housing submit that took place on Humboldt Park on April 2006. Source: Puerto Rican Cultural Center.

Figure 3. No Se Vende Campaign image showing the flags of steel erected in 1995 acting as a fortress protecting the neighborhood from being sold to outsiders. Source: Puerto Rican Cultural Center.

again and this strategy helped increase the level of trust between organizers and residents. Activists also sought to influence electoral politics but they were funded by the Puerto Rican Cultural Center not by politicians like Ocasio.

Figure 4. No Se Vende Campaign sign being held by youth at the 2006 housing submit. Source: Puerto Rican Cultural Center.

Figure 5. No Se Vende march going thought the flags of steel in Humboldt Park erected under the leadership of Alderman Billy Ocasio.

It is important here to provide some context of how Billy Ocasio became the Alderman after Luis Gutiérrez left this position to become Illinois 4th district Congressman. Ocasio, a friend of Gutierrez, was prompted to run for Alderman by a small group of Puerto Rican community leaders, including José López, the executive director of PRCC. Ocasio, a member of the Puerto Rican Agenda, became key in implementing a number of anti-gentrification policies – Including erecting the flag of steel in 1995 which demarcated Humboldt Park as the Puerto Rican neighborhood shown in figure 5 (Flores-González 2001; García 2015; 2017).

Community organizers, who were part of a bottom-up association and not a top-down political movement of the Chicago political machine, registered people to vote and told them where to go to vote if they did not know where voting polls were located. In addition, organizers sometimes gave advice regarding the candidates that were better for the community from a grassroots perspective. Oftentimes, this meant voting for the candidates more in alliance with the identity politics project: Puerto Rican and Latino candidates, as opposed to those of white European descendent. This is a historical phenomenon in Chicago as the district change from Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian Jews to mostly Puerto Rican and Latino.

No Se Vende became part of the general organizing tool box of this participatory democracy and social justice project. The campaign declared an emergency against speculation and property sales in the Puerto Rican community. Using the door to door canvassing method, young activists told residents about the consequences of selling. The campaign started because speculators were targeting elderly people, asking them to sell and cash in their properties. They were, of course, buying low and selling high. Often elderly homeowners did not realize the rising value of their properties and fell prey to unscrupulous realtors. This is a phenomenon that has taken place since the 90s in Humboldt Park, with the exception of the financial crisis of 2008. Activists noticed that the elderly tended to be more trusting and therefore, this group was particularly vulnerable to the offers of speculators.

The No Se Vende campaign, with the name in Spanish, was then a slogan for insiders and especially for the elderly. It was about reaching out to Puerto Ricans, telling them not to sell; it was not meant to be antagonistic to the realtors or to give newcomers the message that they were not welcome in the neighborhood. At first, it was more about increasing awareness about the consequences of selling. The campaign also urged homeowners to not think individualistically, but to think communally. Some homeowners do not realize that when they sell their individual home or property, they are selling more than that, they are selling the community's ability to stay within that neighborhood all together. Many community members agreed with what the activists were saying, while many others perceived them as agitators.

No Se Vende after the 2008 financial crisis

After Billy Ocasio left office in 2009, shortly after the financial crisis of 2008, the door to door campaign of No Se Vende sponsored by the PRCC died out. Activists started to concentrate on: 1) placing signs throughout all of Paseo Boricua, wearing T-shirts, posting ads in newspapers, having a presence at festivals and other community events, in addition to maintaining a Facebook page where people could voice their support, stories, and news; 2) advertising apartments and homes for rent or sale among Puerto Ricans. The most recent slogans employed by the campaign through the reproduction of flyers, postcards, newsletters etc. have been: "Boricua, return to our beautiful neighborhood" and "Oye Boricua, rent an apartment, buy a building, open a business, get involved!" (Cintrón *et al.* 2012). A slogan used in various mediums in 2011 used the Occupy movement to encourage Puerto Ricans everywhere and anywhere to "Occupy Humboldt Park and return to the barrio" (García 2015). In order to achieve the goal of keeping Puerto Ricans in the barrio, or attract new Puerto Ricans to it, the campaign organizers dedicate their time and energy to put together a list of apartments and homes available for rent or sale.

All of these slogans are presented in English and Spanish by the campaign through the reproduction of flyers, postcards, newsletters, community newspapers, posters, t-shirts, stickers, buttons, booths at community festivals, Facebook posting, and petitions to support Bickerdike affordable housing projects. Therefore, the message is directed to both insiders and outsiders, as well as to second and third generation Puerto Ricans. One of the past organizers (Michael) commented that although at first the message was only for Puerto Ricans in time it also became about telling non-Hispanic whites to stay away. In a casual conversation, Jack, a non-Hispanic white young male that used to live in Humboldt Park, told me that he did not like to go to Paseo Boricua precisely because he saw the signs displaying, No Se Vende and they made him feel unwelcomed. Yet, in the same breath Jack said that he was just a graduate student and a renter and that he thought that the sign was not meant for him. What Jack meant is that the sign was trying to dissuade non-Hispanic whites from becoming homeowners in a community visibly declared as Puerto Rican, but it did not say anything about non-Puerto Rican renters.

I think this is an interesting question for both non-Hispanic whites and Puerto Ricans. What about renters? Is No Se Vende also directed at them? I asked this question to Julia the main community organizer of No Se Vende but phrased it in a different way. I shared with her that ACS data from 2006-2010 reported that only about 36 percent of Puerto Ricans in the Puerto Rican Influence Area (PRIA) are homeowners (Cintrón *et al.* 2012). I compared this number to the No Se Vende campaign that I previously observed in Vieques, Puerto Rico where 98 percent of the people on the island were homeowners. That being said, what does this mean for the campaign in Humboldt Park where the majority of Puerto Ricans are renters and not homeowners?

Without any hesitation, Julia told me that the campaign was for *all* Puerto Ricans, homeowners and renters. Gentrification affects Puerto Rican owners and renters, even when homeowner might be of a higher class they are of a lower class when compared to the new comers because of the rents are going up. Often times class is equated to

whiteness, as white people have more purchasing power (Mumm 2014; Mumm 2016; García 2018). Those who support the No Se Vende Campaign are often times in opposition to the negative effects of capitalism while simultaneously understand gentrification as having a colonizing effect. It is important to note here that Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States (Denis 2015; Monge 1999). No Se Vende organizers take a very defensive stand for Puerto Rican cultural nationalism in Chicago.

The idea is to encourage people to stay in the community and tell others they "just can't come in here, destroy and rebuild" as an interviewee expressed. Even if Puerto Rican renters move from apartment to apartment within the community, what matters the most to organizers of No Se Vende, is to maintain the Puerto Rican presence. Julia argue that the rental market is changing substantially due to gentrification. It is becoming more formalized; for example, landlords are requesting their tenants sign leases, provide references and conduct a background and a credit check. They are also requesting a deposit, moving and pet fees. Julia shared with me the story of a couple that decided not to rent due to the many barriers that they encountered:

> I know that there was an apartment that we [No Se Vende] listed. And someone called us back and they were really upset because they were very much cheated by the company. Potential tenants went to the place, there was no mention of any fees for their dogs. The woman's husband was handicapped. He walked with a cane. The Puerto Rican couple went over there and the manager gave him the look and they told him that there was a moving fee even though it wasn't advertised. The manager told them that they would have to pay an extra fee for their dog they were trying to get the deposit and then they yelled "when can you get this done?" She just told me that the manager just gave him the look. The manager required so many things from them to be able to move in that they decided not to move in. This is just working-class people. Then there's a white professional couple that I know that they've seen the beautiful apartment. This one lady was an artist and it was a duplex. She said, "I want this. I can have my studio here. I want it, I want it!"

Another hidden story in this quote is that landlords and management companies are becoming more selective about who they rent to. The previous quote suggests that having a disability seemed risky to the owner for whatever reason, being in terms of assuming a fixed income, or a future liability due to injury. Julia also shared with me a story of how Marta, a Puerto Rican woman, who was turned down due to family size. Julia said about Marta:

> When Marta called for information regarding an apartment for rent, the landlord/manager asked her how many people would be housed in an apartment. Marta responded "three." Th landlord replied, "Three? Oh yeah, it's too small" Marta replied, "hold on can I go and see it? Let me judge, let me go see and let me determine if it's too small or not".

All the tactics that landlords are using now, they did not use years ago, which speaks of the formalization and homogenization of the market. More often than not renters who have been discriminated do not report these incidences to the Commission of Human Relations or to the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity because they simply do not know about it or do not wish to engage in a process that requires time and effort from their part. As informants indicated they simply could go to another landlord.

Towards market formalization and de-localization

The other element is that housing opportunities were advertised locally by placing signs outside the apartment, or the home for rent. The only way to learn about these housing opportunities was to already live in the neighborhood. For example, you will see the sign just by walking by, were referred by friends or family, or purposely deciding that this was a community that you wanted to live in and found the property by touring the neighborhood. Landlords are becoming savvier and now advertise using Craigslist (an U.S. wide add platform), or other rental

websites which allows them to reach a much broader audience. This audience might come from anywhere in Chicago, or even out of state. Local residents without using Craigslist, might not even learn that the property next to them is for rent. Julia also pointed out that landlords are increasingly using realty companies such as Realty Professionals Group LLC, DMG Realty Group, SGJ Property Management, Inc. and many others, to advertise and find a reliable renter for landlords. These companies tend to have open houses, or several appointments at the same time. Julia tells the story of how Puerto Ricans are filtered out from these new practices:

> A Puerto Rican prospective renter that Julia was helping named Malu said to the landlord/ manager, "I've got a check here I can give you for the first month's rent right now. I have a background check and everything." But then there was someone else who also wanted the apartment and they said to the landlord/manager "I'll give you more for it." Julia told Malu that she almost feel like there were people there just to say, 'I'll give you more', just to discourage other people from renting. But Malu was really upset, she said, 'I did everything. I went over there and I even went to talk to the manager myself when there was nobody else, made a separate appointment".

What Julia is trying to communicate is that there is a lot of competition to get into an apartment in comparison to previous years. She pointed out that only the people who are willing to go through the hurdles, are able to find a desirable apartment. No Se Vende helps renters with the process of renting an apartment, by calling landlords, filling out an application on their behalf and any other related activities.

Bohío Housing Services is a new initiative of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) that started in Fall of 2012 to assist renters and homeowners at risk of not being able to make their monthly payments, or who did not have enough savings towards a rental deposit. PRCC was granted about $25,000 for the year, to be able to assist residents experiencing a housing emergency, such as a foreclosure, or a personal situation like illness or death of family members. Only those 60 percent

or below the area median income (AMI) were able to qualify. Although, initially Bohío Housing Services intended to assist homeowners at risk of missing a mortgage payment, the majority of the people receiving assistance were renters. Among renters, the program wanted to help renters (especially of Puerto Rican descent) living outside of Humboldt Park with their deposit, to encourage them to move into the neighborhood. Nonetheless, the vast majority of people who are receiving the assistance are renters who already live in Humboldt Park.

When foreclosed homes are not affordable to us

There is a link between homeowners and renters. No Se Vende makes contacts with Puerto Rican owners who have properties for rent. They help them to find renters by advertising in La Voz (The Voice) newspaper (from PRCC) free of change, as well as the contact email list serve. The campaign also finds properties, many of which have been foreclosed, that are for sale around the neighborhood and tries to advertise them to Puerto Ricans before others find out about them. Julia went on to talk to me about a recent practice that is keeping Puerto Ricans in the community and able to bid on properties that are on the market. Julia states: "Due to the foreclosures many of the properties owned by banks have gone on the short sale list and many outside realtors are trying to sell these homes, right? What they do is they join forces with realtors to try and sell homes. Homes have been going for $80k and $90k". Many Puerto Ricans have been trying to get these deals. They are watching homes being rehabbed on their block and they have been patiently waiting to see when they put the for-sale sign outside if they will be called immediately. Julia explains:

> I was talking to the guy that works in Yalcom (a construction company) and he told me there was a house they were rehabbing. His girlfriend said: "We'll see how much it's going to be?" He said the sign went up. He gave me the number for me to find out about the price. In 15 minutes, they said I am sorry it's on contract. Fifteen minutes! The sign had just

> gone up when they called. And it was already sold, on contract. And he said it's a white person. The realtors are not Puerto Ricans or Latinos because even realtors are coming to complain to Maldonado (the current Puerto Rican Alderman of the 26th ward). They're like "listen, I have experience on how to work with your people to be able to sell. I have customers and potential buyers that I can sell this to. But I'm not getting access to this information. When I share this information, they would be able to send it out to their networks, that people are trying to live here that are Latinos". So, what was happening is that here you have the banks collaborating with the real estate companies and there's an outreach to their networks of people, which are mostly white because that's what we're seeing. Mostly white people find these properties. So, it's affordable properties for them. Not for us. And if we don't have access to them, we don't have any control, or right over who buys. I mean how is it that in 15 minutes the apartment is already under contract. How is that possible? So that's almost like you have already sent this information to your networks of people, before you put them on the multiple listing service which is by law when, let's say if the house is ready to be sold, you have three days to put it on the market. Up to three days you put it on the market and officially advertise it. So, in those three days, or maybe days before then, this information is being sent out to people, to the bank's networks, and to the realtor's networks. Their networks of mostly white people. That's who's buying the properties. And so that's another part of gentrification. I mean that's where it's getting to. They have access to these homes that are cheap and we do not.

After the foreclosure, homes became affordable to some extent, selling for $80,000 or 90,000 in auctions. This meant that working class families who were below the 60 percent of the Area Median Income, had saving and stable jobs finally were able to afford homes. However, these renters, who wanted to become homeowners could not because they were still unable to compete with others. Something that is interesting here is that they were not even able to enter the bid competition because they did not have the information that other networks shared about how to buy these cheap homes. Working class Puerto Ricans were kept out of

the real state community proposedly as the neighborhood change to be more affluent and whiter.

Concluding remarks

In a free market everyone should be able to rent, buy and sell property. No Se Vende is a direct rejection to property rights exercised in these ways. Although in a legal way Puerto Ricans do not own the neighborhood, they own it in the sense that they have lived in the neighborhood for a long period of time and have created memories in the space. The No Se Vende campaign is not about individually owned property within the community, it is about the community itself and owning everything in that community including homes, businesses, schools, and so on. Puerto Rican activists recognize that this is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks they have encountered, keeping their territory. In claiming Humboldt Park as Puerto Rican working class, community organizers recognize that space is not neutral but political and they are committed to reproducing the space as Puerto Rican.

As I read my email while traveling to Chicago I find a newsletter from the Humboldt Park Portal. One of the news articles is titled, "Bickerdike: No Se Vende, Here to Stay." In this article they talked about the importance of preserving housing for low to moderate income families. In many occasions the No Se Vende Campaign organized community residents and activists to collect petitions in support Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation which were contested by the new and more affluent residents. Bickerdike's – who is also a member of the Puerto Rican Agenda along with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center – eco's the words of No Se Vende and declares that Puerto Ricans are "Here to Stay," more than 20 years after the flags of steel were built in 1995.

No Se Vende embodies a narrative that questions traditional notions of individual ownership posed by Smith, Turgot, Beccaria, and other classical economist. Instead, the ideas of No Se Vende community organizers are more aligned with thinkers like Servet, Humphrey,

Harvey, Polanyi, Braudel, and Graeber who have questioned private property. Community organizer Julia embodies this commitment to use values and not exchange values communally. She does this by emphasizing the importance of place to the collective memory of the Puerto Rican working people. Julia operationalizes her philosophical understanding by helping long-term residents to rent, to keep renting when they are short on rent via their Bohío Housing Services and by keeping track of home that are for sale in the Puerto Rican neighborhood that working-class families can afford.

As this case study has demonstrated, the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Bickerdike, and others in the Puerto Rican Agenda have transformed the No Se Vende Campaign into political objectives capable of building affordable housing in order to maintain the Puerto Rican presence in the area. One of the goals of this article was to discuss how Puerto Ricans see gentrification and how they combat it in their everyday life. The groups involved in Humboldt Park have developed a philosophy of praxis where they are able to denounce and halt with some degree of success the pressures of gentrification and displacement. I hope that this case study can be useful to other minority communities being displaced innovative they are encouraged to develop similar strategies to the No Se Vende Campaign and develop creative ways of staying put.

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