

Porto Rican Negroes Burn in the Torch of "Liberty"

(This is the fifth of a series of articles exposing the conditions under which workers are forced to live. The first part of this series, which is running exclusively in The Daily Worker, described the conditions in Negro Mexico. In the two previous articles was begun the exposure of conditions in Lower Mexico, where many Latin-American workers live. The present article deals with the Porto Rican workers.)

By SOL STEINBACH
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It is hard to find a more abject condemnation of Yankee imperialism than the lot of the Porto Rican workers, exploited in both the hunting grounds of the imperialist robbers and in the home country of those exploiters.

When Porto Rico became the property of the Yankee robbers after the imperialist Spanish-American War, the American "enlightenment" immediately set its teeth with the expropriation of the land by large Yankee corporations. Those who could small strips of land were displaced and swelled the army of agricultural laborers.

By 1920 the Porto Rican people, a ragged army of starving toilers, began to come to the United States in large numbers, as a noble testimony of the carnage of imperialism. They ran away from the fields in which they were not even given the privilege to slave in search for something better.

They left their cup of rice a day, or their luxurious meal of fried bananas, for the central point of Yan-

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PORTO RICAN NEGROES MUCH EXPLOITED HERE

Pay High Rents for Miserable Rooms

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kee enlightenment. They tried to evade the snares of the monster only to find themselves caught in its flame and fire.

During the last six years this wave of immigration grew and is still growing today. Porto Ricans, being natives of United States, can pass the statute of liberty, in as many numbers as they please. They are allowed to seek slavery nearer the torch of liberty if they choose.

As a result of the Porto Rican hurricanes the immigration has swelled considerably.

Many Are Negroes.

It must be remembered that many of the Porto Ricans are Negroes. It is estimated that 60 per cent of the Porto Ricans in New York City are Negroes.

The Porto Rican toilers of the soil came to New York City, and found that not only must they live in filthy and crowded tenements, but that they would be constantly subjected to the ripping teeth of the saw of discrimination and racial prejudice. Their lot is even worse than that of American Negroes. They do not know the language. The sound of foreign syllables added to the color of the skin gave the exploiters the excuse to make a doubly strong sound and color barrier of frenzied hatred.

They learned this soon enough. They found that real estate men would not rent them apartments, unless they would live in Negro Harlem, where every available bit of space was taken and where the shears of rent raises cut many lives to pieces.

They also learned this, when by mere force of numbers, they broke their way into lower Harlem, and were allowed to live in large numbers when the landlords discovered that they could use the color of their skins and the strange sounds of their language to demand higher rents.

Many Porto Rican Negroes were welcomed to the tune of street fights and the splash of blood. They found that there was some strong force at work arousing antagonism between them and the Jews. The petty bourgeoisie of Harlem—owners of small grocery stores and other businesses, many of them Jews—were threatened by the growing tide of immigration. Some Porto Ricans turned into petty bourgeois themselves, opening small dingy grocery stores and poached upon the property of the Jewish businessmen. The antagonism which developed grew out of this competition between the petty businessmen of different nationalities. Jewish pusheart vendors found that Latin-American housewives would buy from men of their own color.

The landlords had no small part to play in instilling this antagonism. They took advantage of color and languages to set up different scales of rent, refusing to give the least comfort to the newcomers.

Out of this antagonism between the petty vendors there grew street fights, murders, stabbings. It was dangerous for two Porto Rican Negroes, during the period of these artificially instilled riots, to be heard talking Spanish on the streets.

The workers of all races and nationalities have no reason for such antagonism. The causes of the race riots in lower Harlem are a clear indication of how race barriers are built up by petty trading people and exploiters. The antagonism was made all the stronger when the chain stores began putting these small fry out of business, making their struggle for profits all the sharper.

More Discrimination.

On top of all this, and in addition to discrimination when they tried to work for bread, the Porto Rican Negroes found that the exploiters here had developed their system of barbed-wire fences of racial prejudice into so subtle a network, that in the radiating point of enlightenment, degree of color offered the occasion for another grade of discrimination.

They found that there was a barbed-wire fence between themselves and white Latin-Americans and Creoles. The poisoned fangs of exploitation and discrimination, hiss their way through lower Harlem.

In tomorrow's Daily Worker, read how landlords and bosses reap the profits of barbed-wire fences, how the workers are corralled off into these fenced areas for more vicious exploitation.

Tenants of all colors and nationalities, of all parts of the country, write your letters to your Daily Worker and tell about the house you live in.