

*An Address*

Delinquency  
and the  
Puerto Ricans

*By*

Rev. Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J.

*Associate Professor of Sociology*

Fordham University

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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
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NEWSPAPERS TELL US that delinquency is a serious danger in New York City. Indeed it is. But a far more serious danger would be a sense of panic in the minds of New Yorkers; a fear that our Fair City has begun to decay; a sense of pity that older and peaceful and prosperous times are being snowed under in a new phenomenon of teen-age crime, of slum living, and of poverty.

This would be a strange state of mind for New Yorkers to fall into, but there must be something in the heavy air of the Hudson or the East River that induces this illness in New Yorkers. They have been assigning their Fair City to the dust heap for the past hundred and fifty years, but it always seems to come out fairer than ever. And New Yorkers had another old tradition, something like a tribal practice, I suppose, of always blaming her recurrent ills on the latest strangers who arrived to populate her slums. It takes a bit of maneuvering to substitute Idlewild airport for Castle Garden, but the New Yorkers look as if they are going to succeed in doing it. There are signs of life in the old lady yet. The Irish and the Germans, the Italians and the Jews have now become respectable. But it looks as if the Puerto Ricans will enable the old tradition to survive. For they are joining the company of all the great peoples who went before them; getting their initiation into the noble heritage of immigrants by having all the crime and the ills of the city attributed to their coming.

The interesting thing about this strange infirmity that New Yorkers like to cherish is simply this: that the older and more peaceful and more prosperous times never existed. New York has always been a rough city, often a violent one. Turbulence and upheaval, conflict and adjustment, change and struggle have always been her way of life. That is what made her great. One contemporary Judge wants us to slow things down to give the city time to catch up. New York has never had time to catch up. Wave after wave of newcomers kept driving the city onward; struggle and change have kept her on her toes. The city is great precisely because destiny never allowed her to take a rest. Effort and energy, challenge and striving have drawn from her mind and soul a constant burst of creativeness, of imagination, of drive that has made her what she is. I give you the quotation, for what it is worth, of an old friend of mine, a hard-bitten Irishman who spent his life in the excitement of the Stock Exchange where New York was so very much New York. "Father," he said, "you are privileged to be living in New York these days. You are witnessing the greatest moments of the city's life."

The one simple prescription to cure this recurring dizziness is a sense of perspective, a realization that these are not the worst times of the city's history.

They may be the best. Let's forget about Mayor Wagner for a few moments and listen for a while to the man who was Mayor of New York in 1825. Philip Hone never thought the city would last long enough to have a Mayor in 1859, much less 1959. He wrote in his diary on Monday, December 2, 1839 as follows:

"One of the evidences of the degeneracy of our morals and of the inefficiency of our police is to be seen in the frequent instances of murder by stabbing. The city is infested by gangs of hardened wretches, born in the haunts of infamy, brought up in taverns, educated at the polls of elections, and following the fire engines as a profession. These fellows (generally youths between the ages of twelve and twenty-four) patrol the streets making night hideous and insulting all who are not strong enough to defend themselves; their haunts all the night long are the grog-shops in the Bowery, Corlear's Hook, Canal Street and some even in Broadway, where drunken frolics are succeeded by brawls, and on the slightest provocation knives are brought out, dreadful wounds inflicted, and sometimes horrid murder committed. The watchmen and police officers are intimidated by the frequency of these riots, the strength of the offenders and the disposition which exists on the part of those who ought to know better to screen the culprits from punishment." *Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-51.* (N.Y.: 1936) p. 434.

This is a description of those more peaceful and prosperous days that modern New Yorkers long to have back again. One doesn't have to look very far to see who Philip Hone blames for this distress. According to him, the doom of the city was already assured by the worthless element that was there in abundance:

"(These Irishmen) . . . are the most ignorant and consequently the most obstinate white men in the world, and I have seen enough to satisfy me that, with few exceptions, ignorance and vice go together. . . . These Irishmen, strangers among us, without a feeling of patriotism or affection in common with American citizens, decide the elections of the City of New York . . . the time may not be very distant when the same brogue which they have instructed to shout 'Hurrah for Jackson!' shall be used to impart additional horror to the cry of 'Down with the natives.'" *id.* p. 190.

Can you imagine what chance Mr. Hone would have of becoming Mayor today!

Philip Hone was not by any means alone in his prejudices. John Pintard was another outstanding man of those days, a very spiritual and generous soul who spent much of his time raising funds for the building of St. Patrick's Cathedral and for the support of Irish orphans. Pintard had doubts on many things

but he was a true New Yorker. He knew the city was going to the dogs and he knew the reason why:

"But the beastly vice of drunkenness among the lower laboring classes is growing to a frightful excess, owing to the cheapness of spirits and the multitudes of low Irish Catholics, who, restrained by poverty in their own country from indulgence, run riot in this. . . . We have 3,500 licensed dram shops in this city, two or three on every corner; but if we stop one half . . . the consumers will all go to the other corner . . . as long as we are overwhelmed with Irish immigrants, so long will the evil abound. . . . Thefts, incendiaries, murders which prevail, all rise from this source." *Letters From John Pintard.* (N.Y., 1941) Vol. III, p. 51.

It is too bad that Philip Hone and John Pintard did not tell us more of the really peaceful, and orderly and prosperous days that came twenty years later. Another generation had come; more immigrants had arrived; the city was worse than ever. And who gets the blame? You guessed it. By this time the United States Congress had become interested, just a little prelude to Senator Henning's visit. And we owe to them the following sketch of New York in the 1850's:

"It has been stated in the public journals that of the 16,000 commitments for crimes in New York City, during 1852, at least one-fourth were minors, and that no less than 10,000 children are daily suffering all the evils of vagrancy in that city. In 1849, the chief of the police department of that city called attention to the increasing number of vagrant, idle and vicious children of both sexes growing up in ignorance and profligacy, and destined to a life of misery, shame and crime. . . . He stated that there were then 2,955 children of the class described, known to the police in eleven patrol districts, of whom two-thirds were females between eight and sixteen years of age. Most of the children, as was stated at the time, were of German or Irish parentage, the proportion of the American born being not more than one in five." *Foreign Criminals and Paupers. Report from the Committee on Foreign Affairs,* August 16, 1856 (U.S. 34 Congress, 1st session, House Report No. 359), pp. 16-17. Quoted in Edith Abbott, *Historical Aspects of the Immigration Problem.* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press. 1926) p. 621.

The good members of the House Committee did not confine themselves to New York. They thought on a national scale. It was not only New York City that was going to the dogs; it was the entire nation. However, they had spent enough time in New York City to catch the spirit of that strange tribal practice of finding the roots of all evil in the strangers to our land:

". . . The sources of this great moral evil may be almost wholly traced to the many vices of the

foreign population, who afford no other examples to their children than habits of disorder, idleness and uncleanness, and degrading vices of all kinds, and who exercise no parental authority whatever on them." *Id.* quoted in Abbott, p. 621.

Really, if a New Yorker wants to get the spice of life, a real image in vivid pictures of what was going on; if he wants to know the names of some of these vicious children and the methods of their trade, he can turn to that extraordinary bit of historical reporting that so many New Yorkers so quickly forgot: Herbert Asbury's *Gangs of New York*. (N.Y.: Knopf, 1929). Asbury puts flesh on the bones of statistics. And it amazes me that no publishing house, in these days of mild panic, has seen fit to bring out a cheap paper-back for the edification of all New Yorkers. It is a heartening reassurance that things today are not so bad. If New York survived the eighteen fifties, it should be able to survive anything.

"Conditions such as these soon prevailed throughout the Fourth Ward, and by 1845 the whole area had become a hotbed of crime; streets over whose cobblestones had rolled the carriages of the aristocrats were filled with dives which sheltered the members of such celebrated river gangs as the Daybreak Boys, Buckoos, Hookers, Swamp Angels, Slaughter Housers, Short Tails, Patsy Conroys, and the Border Gang. No human life was safe, and a well-dressed man venturing into the district was commonly set upon and murdered or robbed, or both before he had gone a block. . . . The police would not march against the denizens of the Fourth Ward except in parties of half a dozen or more. . . . Asbury, pp. 48-49.

"Nicholas Saul and William Howlett, who were hanged in the Tombs when the former was but twenty years old and Howlett a year his junior, were the most celebrated leaders of the Daybreak Boys, although membership in the gang included many noted criminals, among them Slobbery Jim, Sow Madden, Cowlegged Sam McCarthy and Patsy the Barber. None of these thugs was more than twenty years old when he had acquired a reputation as a murderous gangster and cutthroat, and there was scarcely a man among them who had not committed at least one murder, and innumerable robberies before he reached his majority. Saul and Howlett joined the gang when they were sixteen and fifteen, respectively, and several others were even younger; a few were as young as ten and twelve years." Asbury, pp. 66-67.

"Every evening the chieftain of the Honeymooners stationed a gangster at each corner of Madison Avenue and Twenty-ninth street, and these worthies maintained their positions until midnight, knocking down and robbing every well-dressed man who appeared. When George S. Walling was appointed captain of police late in 1853 . . . he found

the entire area terrorized by the Honeymoon gang." Asbury, p. 104.

About this time, new rays of light began to appear in public statements. Crime, indeed, preoccupied everyone's mind; and its association with the immigrant poor was taken for granted; but as public officials began to look into the housing conditions of the time, they began to see the situation in new perspective:

"That crime, in general, is on the increase in our community, is a melancholy fact, in spite of the prevalent taste for reading, the multiplication of means of education. . . . Where shall we look for the rankest development of this terrible combination, but in the hideous anomalies of civilization which are to be found in the tenant-house system? . . ." *Report of the Select Committee Appointed to Examine into the Condition of Tenant-houses in New York and Brooklyn*. (N.Y. State Assembly Document No. 205, 1857.) Quoted in Abbott, p. 635.

The Committee had pointed out earlier who was living in these horrible slums. If I may quote a bit more:

"But we must pass over without description hundreds of dilapidated, dirty and densely populated old structures which the committee inspected in different wards and which come under the head of readapted, reconstructed or altered buildings. In most of them the Irish are predominant, as occupants, though in some streets Negroes are found swarming from cellar to garret of tottering tenant houses. In this connection it may be well to remark, that in some of the better class of houses built for tenantry, Negroes have been preferred as occupants to Irish or German poor; the incentive to possessing comparatively decent quarters appearing to inspire the colored residents with more desire for cleanliness and regard for property than is impressed on the whites of their own condition. . . ." *Id.* quoted in Abbott, p. 635.

Make no mistake. This Committee had no particular respect for the foreign poor. They did not think good housing would enable good foreigners to remain good; rather good housing would enable Americans to reform the evil ways of foreign people. The tribal practice had been given a new tone; but they were the same old biased words:

"As a surety we must, as a people, act upon this foreign element, or it will act on us. Like the vast Atlantic, we must decompose and cleanse the impurities which rush into our midst, or like the inland lake, we will receive the poison into our whole national system." *Id.* quoted in Abbott, p. 636.

All this time, of course, while the Daybreak Boys were breaking the skulls of rival gangs or decent citizens,

and while committee after committee spoke philosophically about the evil immigrant poor, hundreds of thousands of these supposedly evil immigrants were pushing their way courageously through poverty and exploitation, were working hard to bring up decent families against hopeless odds; were building their churches and schools; were laying the solid bricks, with human courage and human hope, of what was to be the greatest city of the world.

But the eighteen fifties passed. Came the Civil War, the draft riots, and after the Civil War, amidst the flowering of industry and commerce, the flowering again of those persistent elements of New York life: crime, slums and poverty. John Francis Maguire, a well-known Irish writer, came to observe how his fellow Irishmen were doing in America. Interestingly enough, he caught the fever of New York's writers very quickly. He found the city in a hopeless condition, with little indication that it would ever overcome the difficulties that faced it:

"The evil of overcrowding is magnified to a prodigious extent in New York. . . . There is scarcely any city in the world possessing greater resources than New York, but these resources have long since been strained to the uttermost to meet the yearly increasing demands created by this continuous accession to its inhabitants: and if there be not some check put to this undue increase of the population, for which even the available space is altogether inadequate, it is difficult to think what the consequences must be. Every succeeding year tends to aggravate the existing evils which, while rendering the necessity for a remedy more urgent, also render its nature and its application more difficult." John F. Maguire. *The Irish in America*. (N.Y.: 1868) pp. 218-19.

There were less than eight hundred thousand people in New York when Maguire wrote. If the available space was altogether inadequate then, I wonder what he would say about the nearly eight million who live in the city today. The remedy may have been urgent and difficult. But, somehow, although few people seemed to think so, it was being found. That there was reason for Maguire to say the things he did, and to say things even worse, becomes evident in a little more reading from Asbury:

"Before the Civil War, the juvenile as well as the adult gangs were largely confined to the Five Points, the lower Bowery district, and the Fourth Ward, simply because these were the congested and poverty stricken areas of the city; as the slums increased in extent, gangsters of all types and ages multiplied in numbers and power. By 1870 the streets throughout the greater part of New York fairly swarmed with prowling bands of homeless boys and girls actively developing the criminal

instinct which is inherent in every human being. While all of these gangs chose their titular leaders from their own ranks a majority were at the same time under the domination of adult gangsters or professional thieves who taught the children to pick pockets, snatch purses and muffs, and steal everything they could lay their hands upon while they masked their real business by carrying bootblack outfits, baskets of flowers, or bundles of newspapers. . . ."

"There were the Forty Little Thieves, the Little Dead Rabbits, and the Little Plug Uglies, the members of which imitated their elders in speech and deed, and as far as possible in appearance. And in the Fourth Ward, along the Waterfront, were the Little Daybreak Boys, composed of lads from eight to twelve years of age who were almost as ferocious as the older gangsters whose name they adopted and whose crimes they strove mightily to imitate." Asbury, pp. 238-39.

It is a rather disturbing and upsetting picture, isn't it? And if one saw nothing else, or failed to see these dismal situations against the background of all the other aspects of the city's life, he could easily conclude, as so many did, that the city was facing its last days. There was one other group that was concerned about the situation, and we must not overlook the things they had to say. They were the Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of the United States, met in the Second Plenary Council in Baltimore in 1866. Urging the establishment of Catholic Reform Schools or Industrial Schools, they wrote in their Pastoral Letter:

"It is a melancholy fact and a very humiliating avowal for us to make, that a very large proportion of the idle and vicious youth of our principal cities are the children of Catholic parents. Whether from poverty or neglect, the ignorance in which so many parents are involved as to the true nature of education, and of their duties as Christian parents, or the associations which our youth so easily form with those who encourage them to disregard parental admonition; certain it is that a large number of Catholic parents either appear to have no idea of the sanctity of the Christian family, and of the responsibility imposed on them of providing for the moral training of their offspring, or fulfill this duty in a very imperfect manner. Day by day, these unhappy children are caught in the commission of petty crimes which render them amenable to the public authorities; and, day by day, they are transferred by hundreds from the sectarian reformatories into which they have been placed by the courts to distant localities where they are brought up in ignorance of, and most commonly, in hostility to the Religion in which they were baptized." Martin J. Spalding, Ed. *Concilii Plenarii Baltimorensis II, 1866*. (Baltimore, 1868) p. cxviii.

This, then, is part of the record of that old and peaceful and orderly life which so many New Yorkers long for when they read of the Royal Crowns and the Egyptian Kings. It was a life, like so much of New York's life, of crime and violence, of struggle and effort. But with it all, the strong, human, creative elements won out. New York has not become what it is without struggle; and if the struggle of the past gave us the greatness of the present, can we not expect that the struggle of the present will give us the even more impressive greatness of the future?

As we reach the time when my quotations end, about the year 1870, certainly we could say the city needed a rest. If only they could have stopped migrations to allow the city to catch up, to clear the slums, to eliminate the crime! And what happened? New ships appeared with new faces, bringing an even stranger babble of new tongues. The Italians and the Jews began to crowd in just about the time when the Irish and the Germans were finding themselves. Whereas the Irish may have brought 100,000 a year at some times, the new migration was to bring a million a year. New York had not seen the beginning of strangers. New challenge; new distress; new slums; new poverty; new crime, and hundreds of thousands of new immigrants to be blamed for it. The record need not delay us. Jacob Riis was around to write some of the record for us. *How the Other Half Lives* (America Century Series, N.Y.: Sagamore Press, 1957) is fortunately out in paper-back. Read it for yourselves. Were things bad in 1870? They were worse in 1890. Riis tells us there were gangs on every corner (Riis, p. 164). Where did they come from? Here we have not only a new tune, but a new script. Riis saw what many an intelligent person had seen before him. The gang was not the product of evil foreigners. It was the product of life in New York; the by-product of generations lost in the confusion and bewilderment of the uprooting; the weak ones who fell by the wayside when they faced the shock of moulding a new way of life for themselves in a new world; the price we pay for a system that urges people of talent to advance socially and economically—some people are ground down in the process; the unfortunate resultant of a system in which parents of one culture will never fully understand the way of life of their children, and children will never fully understand the way of life of the parent; these are some of the things we began to see more clearly toward the close of the last century. But the record of history is eloquent: the crime that distressed the city, the slums and poverty that created such a constant burden on its life did not destroy the city's greatness; they were a part of the goad and the challenge that evoked the effort that made the city great.

Now again we have crime; we have slums; we have poverty; and, now again, we face the traditional malady of the New Yorker: the lament that the city is going to the dogs, and the revival of the old tribal practice of blaming our crime and poverty on the Puerto Ricans who now find themselves socially in the slot where the Germans and the Irish were a century ago.

In the perspective of the past, therefore, we can now take a brief look at the present. There is nothing in the record of the past or the experience of the present that gives us reason for composure. Crime and the poverty of city slums are terrible evils. But there is much in the record of the past that gives hope: hope for the old New Yorkers; hope for the Puerto Ricans; hope for the Negroes. The record does not tell us that crime and poverty were ever easy. It simply tells us that they have always been here; that the citizens of New York have always had to exert enormous energy and courage to deal with them; that they have done surprisingly well.

Indeed, when one looks back over the experience of the immigrants, and when one looks closely at the experience of the Puerto Ricans, the marvel is not that there has been so much delinquency, but that there has been so little. As with every group of newcomers in the past, so with the Puerto Ricans: they are not nearly as great a problem for New York, as New York is a problem for them.

In the first place, delinquency is not something the Puerto Ricans bring with them. It is something that happens to them when they get here. They come from a way of life which they cherish; they have traditions of respect; they know what to expect of others and what others expect of them; they know the things for which they will be honored and the things for which they will be punished or despised. Then they come to New York and all the expectations change. Uprooted from a way of life they took for granted, they find themselves as strangers in a way of life they do not understand. Things that were right in Puerto Rico, they find are wrong here. Things that were wrong in Puerto Rico, they find are right here. Things that brought them honor in Puerto Rico invite ridicule in New York. The values are different; norms are no longer consistent. Life becomes confused. They are the "uprooted," and the suffering that has marked the coming of every group of immigrants now begins to shake the framework on which their life was built.

One young Puerto Rican man whom I know stopped me the other day and remarked: "Father, things are not going too well with my little girl. She is fourteen now and in the ninth grade. But her mother goes to school with her and calls for her when school is over.

The girl is beginning to rebel against this. The other girls make fun of her and of her mother. I don't know what to do." How many sincere and interested teachers both in the Catholic and public schools have remarked to me, mentioning the Puerto Rican mothers who wait outside the school for their children at the end of class: "Father, why don't you tell them to let up on the children? They're making babies out of them."

Here we have the case of conscientious Puerto Rican parents trying, in the best way they know how, to protect their children, especially their young girls. Protection of the young girl is a serious responsibility for a good family in Puerto Rico. They do not escort them to school and back because they know what to expect in Puerto Rico. They understand the situation and have no fears. But in New York fear prompts them to exercise their responsibility in the best way they know how. As they do so here, the child may be ridiculed; the parents may be criticized or laughed at; family authority is weakened; old norms of control are shaken; conflict between the generations is in the making.

Another young Puerto Rican I know has a young boy about six years old. The boy has been in school now for two years. I asked the father recently: "How is the young boy making out?" The father replied with a shrug of the shoulders, half in amusement, half in bewilderment: "Father, he is a true American; he is already telling me how much I do not know."

Many children in Puerto Rico have the beautiful custom of asking their parents or their elders for a blessing when they go out or come home or when they go to bed. It is part of that wonderful pattern of "respect" that is often taught to Puerto Rican children. Explaining how these customs are undermined in New York, a wonderful young woman, a Puerto Rican school teacher, deeply devoted to her people, told me the following story: "I was visiting an aunt of mine one day, and two of my small cousins, recently arrived from Puerto Rico, came in to see her. They bounced in gleefully and, when they saw my aunt, they called out '*Bendición, Tía.*' 'Your blessing, please, Auntie.' Father," she said, "I feel humiliated to tell you what happened. But, I laughed. The children turned to me, puzzled and confused. A practice of reverence, for which they were praised in Puerto Rico, had become an object of laughter in New York."

In how many other aspects of life does this not occur: behavior of a wife which we would define as part of "togetherness," the self-reliance, the alertness of the American woman might strike a Puerto Rican wife and husband as a sign of sinful disrespect. The devotion of a woman to her husband, schooled in them

by centuries of tradition, they find criticized as excessive subordination, the lack of proper female independence.

When you talk with so many good Puerto Rican parents, one refrain is constant: "It is impossible to bring a child up in New York." The qualities of independence, of self-reliance, of assertiveness which we admire, which we try to teach children as necessary virtues in our competitive American system, these strike the Puerto Rican parent as a lack of proper childhood respect. The child lives in one way of life in the home and is taught another way of life in the school. Parent will never fully understand child, and child will never fully understand parent. The seeds of the conflict between the generations are being sown.

These are the difficulties of the uprooting. Millions of immigrants have faced them before. The Puerto Ricans are facing them now. Fortunately, most people manage to become adjusted to them without serious distress and the Puerto Ricans will do the same. But in the process, if there is weakness in the family or weakness in the personality, disorganization sets in, mental illness and delinquency appear, and the price for the great values of migration and urban living are paid in the distress of old and new resident in the turmoil of social and cultural change.

This was so vividly illustrated in the case of Julio Rosario, the young Puerto Rican who died in the gang warfare of the lower East Side in August. Julio apparently came from a good family. His father, with the strength and spiritual qualities of a patriarch, bore the trial of his son's death with a dignity, a composure, an acceptance of God's will that brought tears to the eyes of many who watched him. At the end of the Requiem Mass, he embraced each of the priests of the Mass, each of the altar boys, in gratitude for this service to his son. How much he had wanted to give to his son that wonderful dignity of the man from the hills of Puerto Rico, that quality which would bring so much richness to New York if we could save it! How much he wanted to give his son that which he was himself—and how much the son would have been blessed in receiving it! But life in New York got in the way. Things that gave a boy dignity and honor in the countryside of Puerto Rico were not the things that gave a boy dignity and honor on Forsyth Street. Things that were rewarded in the customs of a Puerto Rican village were not the things that were rewarded in the churning life of the lower East Side. What a new and strange world of values, of struggle, of loyalty, dignity and pride was reflected in Julio's words! After he had received the last rites, he slipped into semi-consciousness, mumbling: "Tell the guys they can count on me; tell them I'll be there."

How easy it is to blame delinquency on the parents! In many cases they must certainly share the blame. But how unfair we can sometimes be in giving the impression that any decent family should be able to avoid the tragedies that strike frequently in the troubled neighborhoods of a city like New York.

What I have said does not begin to explain delinquency. I hope it will explain what the great majority of Puerto Ricans are going through. I hope it will help us realize that we can help the Puerto Ricans avoid delinquency, not by criticizing them: they do not need statistics to tell them about delinquency; they live in the face of it, they suffer from the behavior of delinquents much more than we do; they understand, much better than their middle and upper class American critics, the difficulties that many of their people face in disorganized family life, in poverty, in exploitation. But they understand also, what I hope we will all come to understand, the greatness that lies in the hearts of so many of their people, their generosity and respect for friendship, their desire to become part of the life of the great City of New York.

In this regard, I could hardly exhort you to do anything better, as Catholic students, than to imitate the example of our spiritual leader, Cardinal Spellman. The public has not yet begun to realize or appreciate the extraordinary effort His Eminence is making to ensure that we will receive the Puerto Ricans as our brothers and sisters in Christ. At enormous expense in money and manpower, he has been sending large numbers of his priests and Sisters to Puerto Rico for special training that will enable them to work more effectively with the Puerto Ricans in New York. Indeed, in the history of migrations, I know of no other instance where a receiving diocese has gone to such unusual lengths to prepare its priests and Sisters to understand the culture and the background of the newcomers in order to receive them as its own. History will probably look upon this as a social miracle. What a pity it would be if, while His Eminence strives so hard to have the Puerto Ricans received with respect, we should alienate them by lack of understanding, discourtesy or prejudice.

I trust that my words have been of some guidance and some help. Perhaps, in the year 2059, when some Jesuit priest may be addressing Fordham students in the ancient halls of Lincoln Square, he may recall the moment in 1959, in those days so far, far back when Puerto Ricans were coming to New York, that a group of Fordham students met in Shealy Hall and decided to break the old tribal practice of blaming everything on the newcomers, and to receive the Puerto Ricans with understanding, dignity and respect, not as strangers, but as their own.