



5 WASHINGTON STREET,
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102



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Please contact Yesenia Lopez at 973-733-4791 or ylopez@npl.org

For Immediate Release

**The NJHRIC at The Newark Public Library presents an exhibit,
*“Newark ’74: Remembering the Puerto Rican Riots - An Unexamined History”***

The Newark Public Library is proud to present “Newark ’74: Remembering the Puerto Rican Riots - An Unexamined History,” an exhibit collecting materials that document the series of “Latino Riots” that occurred in New Jersey in the 1960s and 1970s. These “riots” are a mostly forgotten period of New Jersey state history.

The basis of the exhibit is “Newark ’74: Remembering the Puerto Rican Riot,” a travelling exhibit from Bloomfield College. In Spring 2014, Professor Michelle Chase and her class conducted research on the 1974 Puerto Rican Riots of Newark. Using materials found in both the Puerto Rican Community Archives (PRCA) and the New Jersey Information Center of The Newark Public Library, Professor’s Chase’s class mounted their exhibit, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Newark Puerto Rican Riot. The exhibit was on display at Bloomfield College from April through August, 2014 before travelling to the Newark Public Library.

Archivist Yesenia Lopez and associate archivist Elizabeth Parker of the PRCA have selected supplementary materials from the PRCA’s collections and added them to the exhibit in order to contextualize the Newark Riot. Far from being an isolated incident, the 1974 Puerto Rican Riot was one of many that occurred across the state of New Jersey in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike the “race riots” that involved predominantly African-American communities, the “Latino riots” have faded into obscurity over the past 40 years. It is truly an unexamined history, and the materials on exhibit demonstrate that.

Very little in depth scholarship has been conducted on the “Latino Riots.” In local histories, they generally merit only a brief mention, if indeed they are discussed at all. Only one scholarly article was found to address these riots specifically. An undergraduate student from Loyola University Chicago, Pedro Regalado, conducted independent research on the 1971 “Latino riot” in Camden; this study includes his observations on the dearth of research on the “Latino riots.” Examples of these brief mentions in scholarly publications are on display.

The remaining scholarship is also the product of student work. In 2000, Dr. Olga J. Wagenheim of Rutgers-Newark taught a class on community histories that resulted in the students creating original research from primary sources about the 1974 Riots. This research was presented to the community at the event “Recovering “New Jersey’s Hispanic History: The Puerto Rican Riots in Newark, 1974,” which included a panel discussion with eye-witnesses of the events. Materials from that event are currently on display.

One of the best resources for studying these events is the people who witnessed them. By conducting oral histories with these eye-witnesses, we are able to capture their memories of the riots that would otherwise be lost to the historical record. Each narrator has their own recollections of what they witness (full audio clips of their narratives may be found on the Newark Public Library’s website), but taken together they form a more holistic view. One of the themes that emerges when talking to witnesses, and in reading accounts from newspaper clippings, is that the “riots” are called many things including “disorders” and “disturbances.” Even the witnesses themselves vary on how to refer to these events. A lesson about insurance liability learned in the aftermath of the 1967 Newark Riot might provide one answer to the question, “Why not call it a ‘riot’?” Excerpts from these oral histories are on display with other primary sources, such as newspaper coverage of the riots. Taken together, these materials provide the most comprehensive coverage of the riots, demonstrating the broadest view and scope of the riots that took place in the Latino communities of New Jersey during the 1960s and 1970s.

The exhibit and program is free and will be open to the general public on October 1, 2014 at 5:30pm with a presentation and discussion between eye-witnesses and scholars who will discuss their experiences of and research on the “Latino riots.” Materials will be on display in the 4th Floor Gallery of the Newark Public Library through December, 2014.



This program is cosponsored by the Friends of the HRIC.

The Bloomfield College exhibit materials was made possible by a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations in this exhibit do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.

