

ARGUMENT

Puerto Rico Walks away from Commonwealth

I will not pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands. This must be the words of thousands of Puerto Ricans living in the island today wishing that their small island would once and for all become free from the colonization of the United States. Puerto Rico has been living under U.S. domination for the past 92 years and it's considered the last nation in Latin America that is still living in colonization.

Puerto Ricans want to be free and should be allowed to be free; to have the opportunity to vote for the president who sends its young people to war, to have their own currency, to fly one flag in all their schools and finally to feel pride in being an independent nation and not labeled with terms like "territory" and "commonwealth."

Bigger and more powerful nations that inhabit smaller nations for various benefits should never deny a nation's culture and roots, instead in these modern times people should be allowed to govern themselves and be independent nations. In the midst of the struggle over status (U.S. commonwealth or Independency) only one clear realization can come of this, Puerto Rico ought to be independent

and refuse commonwealth to the United States of America.

One of the many benefits citizens from all democratic countries enjoy is the ability to choose their chief in command. As a commonwealth under the United States, Puerto Rico citizens cannot vote during the presidential campaign. They are allowed to participate in presidential primaries but not the final event. This is somewhat of an insult to the younger generation on the island being sent off to fight wars representing the U.S. having been denied the privilege to choose the person who is sending them. As an independent nation Puerto Ricans would have the right to participate in elections choosing who their leader would be. The island does have its own elections where they get to choose who will become governor and other various members of the political cabinet but all of these have limited power in deciding the fate of the island. The Governor is allowed to run the island and handle domestic issues but Washington has the final word.

This struggle for power has also affected the economy and the ability to export and carry out trades with other nations;

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United States keeps a tight hold on who the island does business with, ultimately creating a dependent economy. Puerto Rico should be allowed to diversify their sources of capital and their export market something that would strengthen its economy and eliminate the economic dependency that has been created throughout the years. Many in the island believe that independency would allow Puerto Rico to open a broader trading market and as stated by Eric Negron, tax adviser to the independence party, "as an independent nation Puerto Rico could attract foreign investment and it would at the same time be better able to direct what sort of industries is brought to the island." Remaining a commonwealth takes all of these economic privileges away from the people and the government of Puerto Rico who want to see the island's economy soar to a new level.

Nations across the world can be proud of their heritage and culture, which makes up their country and it's the backbone to each individual society. A nation's language is a stamp of their history; the DNA that makes up its people. Puerto Rico as a commonwealth could be in danger of losing its national language. Spanish has been the island's national language since

the Spanish conquistadors first discovered it in 1492. United States wants Puerto Rico to make the change from Spanish to English and demands that both Spanish and English be the national languages; many schools across the island have already made the transaction and now teach in both languages. Being a Puerto Rican is not being part of an ethnic group or speaking Spanish is not speaking a dialect; these citizens are people who have their own language and roots and deserve the right to conserve their heritage and most important their culture.

However, as a person born in Puerto Rico I have enjoyed many of the benefits that being a commonwealth has provided in my life. One of the most important benefits is the right to American citizenship upon birth. All Puerto Ricans who are born in the island are American citizens and are free to enter the mainland U.S. If Puerto Rico remains a commonwealth this is a benefit that future generations will continue to enjoy. Another benefit the island enjoys is the aid provided by the United States and the tax exemption the island receives; Puerto Rico is exempt from paying federal taxes. Many supporters of the commonwealth status clearly point out the help the island receives and

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how life would be if Puerto Rico did not receive the strong financial support from the United States and research provided in the CQ Researcher article, Puerto Rico: The Struggle Over Status points out that "Puerto Rico receives generous tax benefits and more than \$6 billion a year from the U.S government" clearly something that the island will not receive if it became independent. All of these benefits the island receives still do not amount to independency and the benefit to govern itself. As an independent nation Puerto Rico would open its trading market with various countries around the world expanding the economy and not having to depend on the help the United States provides. American citizenship could be obtained through the necessary legal steps and travel between the island and the U.S. will still be available.

Receiving the benefits Puerto Rico receives from the United States has helped the island through the years develop into the place it is today but it has come at a costly price with words like "territory" and "commonwealth" attached to it. No nation should turn its back on their heritage, culture and language at the expense of tax exemptions and financial aid.

Instead, Puerto Rico ought to be independent to steer its own course and have the ability to conduct economic trades with other nations, keep Spanish as the main language and have the final word in government issues that affect its people.

The Puerto Rican people need to cut the umbilical cord it has created to the United States and stand by their roots, culture and independency. The voice of thousands of Puerto Ricans living in the island need to come forward and make Puerto Rico a free independent nation.