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A SOCIAL PROBLEM WE DECIDED TO SOLVE!

7/25
A year or two back, authorities were gravely concerned with what was happening to Puerto Rican immigrants to continental United States. Puerto Rico is a United States territory, and its inhabitants are citizens with unlimited right of entry. They had begun to come in great numbers to New York City.

In New York, they found themselves subjected to residential segregation, and practically forced to congregate in "Spanish Harlem", which was already monstrosly overcrowded. Many of them spoke only Spanish and lacked saleable skills, so they got only the most unskilled jobs. Huge numbers went on relief.

Overcrowding and hunger made them victims and carriers for many diseases and delinquencies. Knife-wielding juvenile gangs, vice, and crime became a serious problem among New York Puerto Ricans.

But New Yorkers did not just try to wall them off or shut them out. Social agencies, public and private, did what they could to help, and sought to draw the Puerto Ricans themselves into the work as consultants and leaders. Settlement houses, schools, and universities did some research and experiments. The mayor set up an advisory committee on Puerto Rican affairs. Special employment language classes were held, and special Puerto Rican exhibits and concerts.

Today more than 90 per cent of the Puerto Ricans in New York are well adjusted and earning their own livings. The group still has a higher percentage on relief than other New Yorkers, but the gap is shrinking.

They are no longer confined to East Harlem, but are spreading out to many sections of the city. And 20 per cent of the immigrants from Puerto Rico now go to places outside of New York City altogether, in search of better opportunities.