

I Am Indigenous to Puerto Rico

Zorayeli Rodriguez

I am Indigenous to Puerto Rico. My ancestors were Taíno. That is the name of the Indigenous people who lived there before Spanish invaders came to the island.

Puerto Rico is a beautiful island. We call it La Isla Bonita. The Taíno people called it Borikén. I grew up in a house with two floors. My abuelo and abuela lived on the first floor, and my aunt and I lived on the second floor.

Every morning, Abuela had fresh bread with butter and coffee. It smelled so good, and we all sat on the porch together for breakfast.

For dinner, Abuela made all types of food. My favorite was Mofongo. Mofongo comes from a West African dish, called Fufu, a mash of boiled yam. Mofongo is mashed plátanos. You can also add chicken, pork, or chicharrón. Delicious!

And we would dance! We danced when we were happy or sad. We still do. It has been a tradition for many thousands of years. We get that tradition from our indigenous Taíno roots. We say, let's just dance and sing, whatever our life circumstances are. So many things we can't change. But we should make the best of our lives.



Zorayeli Rodriguez is a student at ALC-Lehman College, CUNY, in New York City. She is a mother of three kids: twin girls and one boy. She is a student and a worker. She was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, and when she was nine, she moved to El Barrio, also known as East Harlem, in New York City. She currently lives in the Bronx.

Taíno History: “We Are Still Here!”



This 18-minute video <tinyurl.com/taïnohistory> tells the story of Taíno history at the time that one of Columbus's three ships ran aground near the island he called Hispaniola. Within 60 years of Columbus's arrival, Europeans had killed most of the Taíno people living there and on nearby Borikén. Although, some historians say Taínos are extinct, it is not true. Taíno culture is alive and well, and DNA tests show that most Puerto Ricans have Taíno ancestors. Read a story in the “Hair” issue of *The Change Agent* (pp. 4-5) by Lesette Manners (pictured left) about her Puerto Rican heritage.