

Contact:
Rafael Rodriguez
E-mail: Rafael@puertoricoadvancement.org
Tel: 917-573-8342



**STATEMENT BY
THE CENTER FOR PUERTO RICO EQUALITY & ADVANCEMENT**

As an American and a conservative, I take great offense at the venomous darts fired by Mark Krikorian in his recent National Review Online post titled “What Do You Mean We?” in which he questions the right of Puerto Ricans – beginning with that of our sole representative in the United States Congress – to consider ourselves a part of the United States.

Whether Mark Krikorian likes it or not, Puerto Rico is a United States territory and Puerto Ricans are natural born U.S. citizens, just like citizens born anywhere else under the glorious banner of the Stars and Stripes. I know you would like to, Mr. Krikorian, but sorry – you cannot – turn back the clock. Sending African Americans back to Africa was not a practicable solution to the evil of slavery in the 19th century, and forcing independence on the disenfranchised American citizens of Puerto Rico is not a practicable solution in the 21st.

I will agree with one important, salient point made by Mr. Krikorian. In practice, the island’s current territorial status is essentially colonial in nature, and the perpetuation of that status is indeed unnatural and unworthy of the most basic principles of the American Republic.

What Mr. Krikorian fails to take into account, however, is that for almost 60 years now our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico have lived under a territorial constitution, which expressly declares American citizenship and their loyalty to the Constitution of the United States to be “determining factors” in their lives, both collectively and individually. Sooner or later, the only natural destiny for citizens such as those, Mr. Krikorian, is the citizenship equality that only statehood can provide.

Once statehood wins the support of a decisive majority of the island’s electorate – and the time will come when it will – what our Nation should do is face its past and its principles, and facilitate an orderly, long overdue transition to statehood for Puerto Rico.

Furthermore, in view of Mark Krikorian’s well-known anti-immigration postures, it is worth underscoring that because of the way Puerto Rico was acquired in the expansion of the United States, Puerto Ricans have never been immigrants. But we are indeed part of a nation of immigrants.

The vast majority of Americans are, in fact, descended from immigrants who came to this country for a better life, made ours a better country, and now, along with Puerto Ricans, define what it is to be an American. Krikorian himself is descended from some of those very immigrants. Interestingly, as a matter of fact, as the grandson of Armenian immigrants, Mark Krikorian is descended from people who have been Americans for a shorter period of time than Puerto Ricans.

Rafael Rodríguez
President
Center for Puerto Rico Equality & Advancement