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MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

THE STORY OF PUERTO RICAN STUDIES IN BROOKLYN COLLEGE

Directed by Tami Gold and Pam Sporn
Produced by Gisely Colón López, Tami Gold, and Pam Sporn



A Production of the Alliance for Puerto Rican Education & Empowerment
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Making the Impossible Possible: The Story of Puerto Rican Studies in Brooklyn College 2021

Recommended

Distributed by Third World Newsreel, 545 Eighth Avenue, Suite 550, New York, NY 10018; 212-947-9277

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Streaming, 33 mins

Middle School - General Adult

Education; Latino (United States); Social Movements

Date Entered: **01/06/2022**

[Reviewed by Michael A. LaMagna, Associate Professor & Reference Librarian, Delaware County Community College, Media, PA](#)

Placed within the context of the social and political activism of the 1960s, *Making the Impossible Possible*, documents the struggles and successes of students from the Puerto Rican Alliance to first create the Institute of Puerto Rican Studies and shortly after a permanent academic department in Brooklyn College. This film tells a compelling story through a mix of interviews with the former students involved with the fight for a Puerto Rican Studies program, archival footage, and photographs, of the fight to create a welcoming environment designed for Puerto Rican students. These students left the New York City Public School System ill-prepared for life on a City University of New York (CUNY) campus such as Brooklyn College. In the 1960s, a campus like Brooklyn College had a Puerto Rican student population of less than 1%. Working alongside African American students who shared similar interests to have a curriculum that reflects their lived experiences, culture, and heritage these students worked to make changes at the institution and beyond. This included demanding open access admission which increased enrollment both at the institution and the Department of Puerto Rican Studies and working in the community to apply what was being taught in the classroom such as bilingual education. While this film documents the successes of members of the Puerto

Rican Alliance to enact change, it is clear the struggle to hire faculty members and adequately fund the department continues to this day.

While there are many who question the need for ethnic studies departments and the academic rigor of the degrees they award, *Making the Impossible Possible* highlights the value of these programs and departments both within the classroom by providing students an often unavailable opportunity to learn about their cultural and heritage but also outside the classroom by creating a welcoming and supportive space that offers the encouragement necessary for institutions to retain these students through the completion of their degrees. As higher education continues to struggle with providing a welcoming environment for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), this film provides a framework that has worked in the CUNY system.

This short film provides an engaging story of the creation of the Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies but also where it is now. This film is **recommended** for all collections, especially those supporting Puerto Rican and Latinx studies, the study of education and higher education, and history collections.

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