

## EXPANDED ANSWER 22:

### THE PROBLEM: RAW POTENTIAL MEETS BRUTAL REALITY

While the symptoms are many, most of our problems can be traced to our status as a colony of a colony. We have multiple masters and no control over our destinies. We can ask, beg, or demand, but we can't decide or make much happen to lift our prospects under the current forms of government. All of the important decisions are made for us. Like children, our US and PR parents determine almost everything from school curriculum to ferry schedules; from career allocations to business options; everything is controlled.

Most Vieques residents would agree:

- We are treated as inmates by the PR government with little to no say in governing ourselves. We are the tip of the tail of the dog.
- The US government tries to buy their way out of complex obligations to the island while not improving the condition of life or the future of our people. We come under Federal rules and laws (from the Jones Act, to the war on drugs, to taxation....) with absolutely no input or control – no vote.
- The services provided to us are poor, inadequate, and unreliable. We are not allowed to improve or correct them ourselves:
  1. Education – PR is the worst in the US, and Vieques is the worst in PR
  2. Healthcare – Totally inadequate and difficult to access in PR
  3. Police Protection – Poorly trained, systemically corrupt, wholly ineffective
  4. Criminal Justice – Financially and morally bankrupt and access onerous
  5. Transportation (ATM) – Oppression of citizens to benefit employees and managers
  6. Access to government services – Rationing of services through limiting access
  7. Real Property Registration – Archaic system, totally inefficient and inadequate
  8. Permits and Business Licenses – Extremely well designed to limit business formation, kill construction projects, and feed an army of self-serving bureaucrats.

Our situation (and the related pain) demands that we make changes. For decades citizens here have tried myriad approaches to no avail. Neither our needs nor our desires have impact. PR mandates the dependency of Vieques like a life sentence without parole. This existing hierarchy of forced dependency does not favor or support us. We are chattel to be used, rented out, sold, or disposed of as the central government sees fit for their own benefit. A clean break and a fresh start are needed. (“Dependency, after all, is a constituency with life tenure.” Washington Post Journalist Kathleen Parker)

*If we're not allowed to govern ourselves under the current system, and if we can't change that system, we are left with the single option of leaving the relationships completely. Many might*

think such thoughts are fantasy or pipe dreams because they don't believe it is possible given the governments under which we live. They are right, in order to progress in any way, we need to move outside of the established procedures that have never worked for us here anyway.