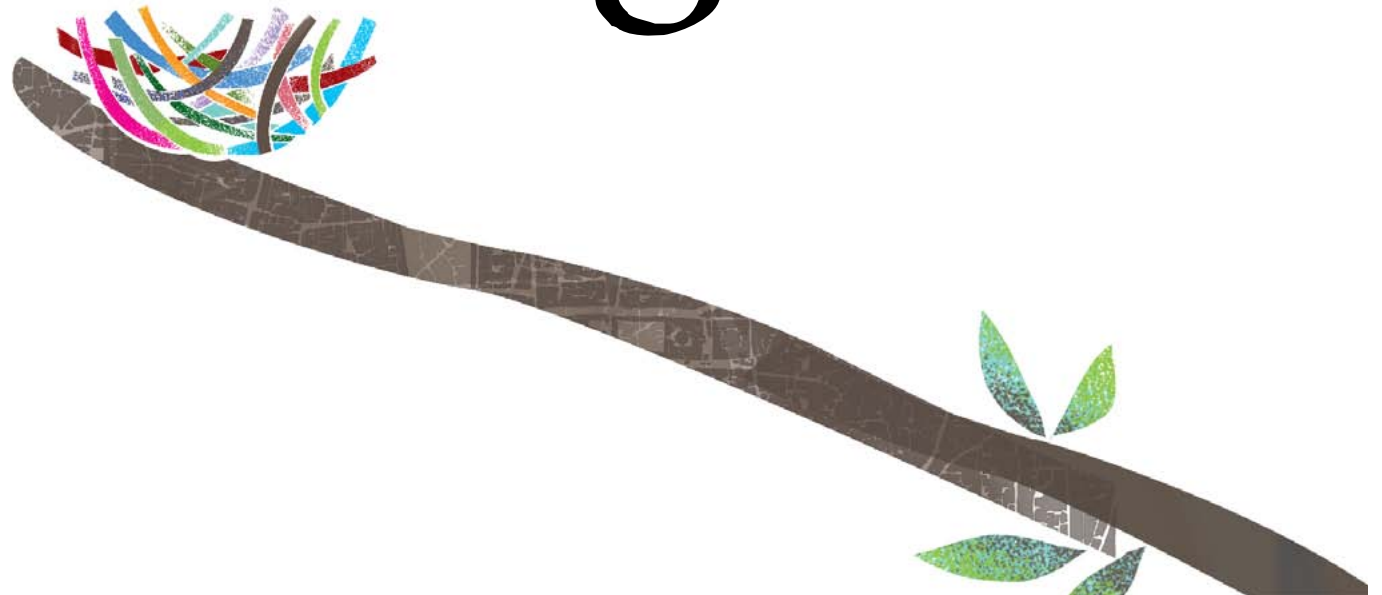


# My Rights



My Rights

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Illustrations: Mrinali Álvarez Astacio

Original text in Spanish: Jorge Martínez Luciano

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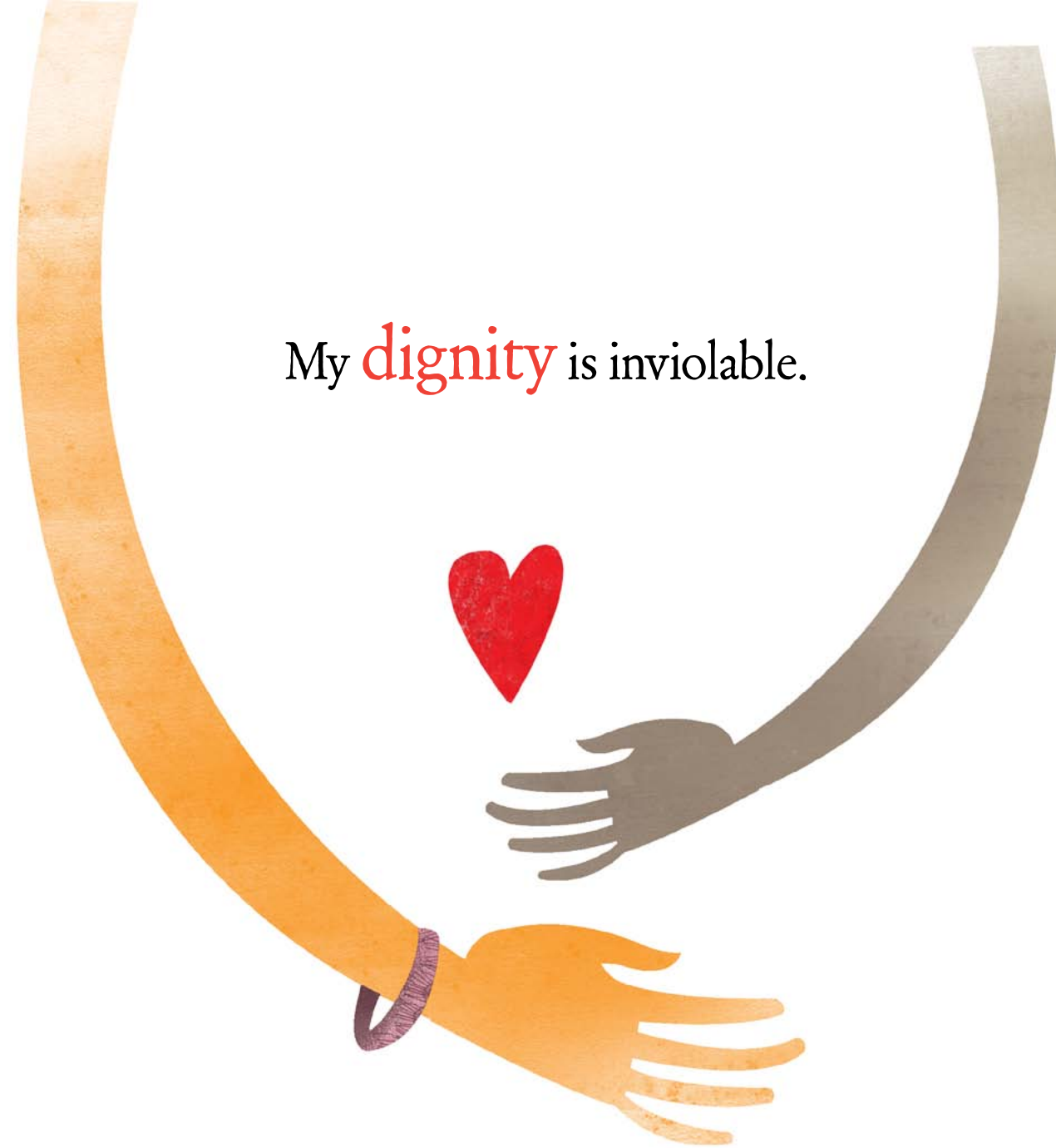
# My Rights

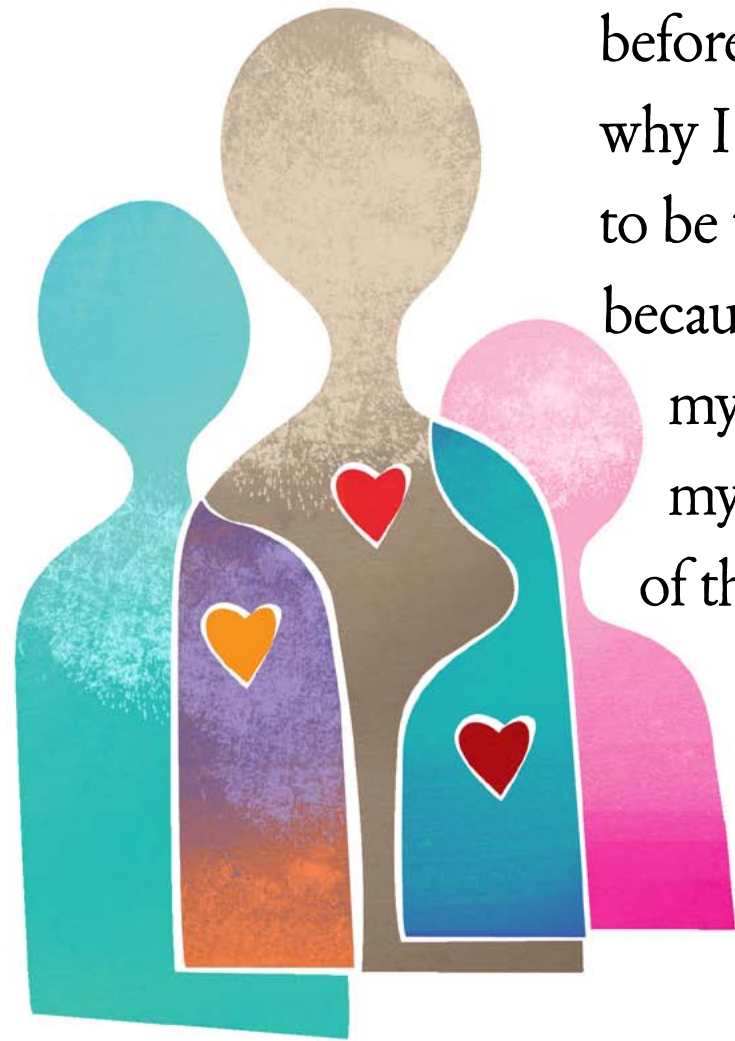


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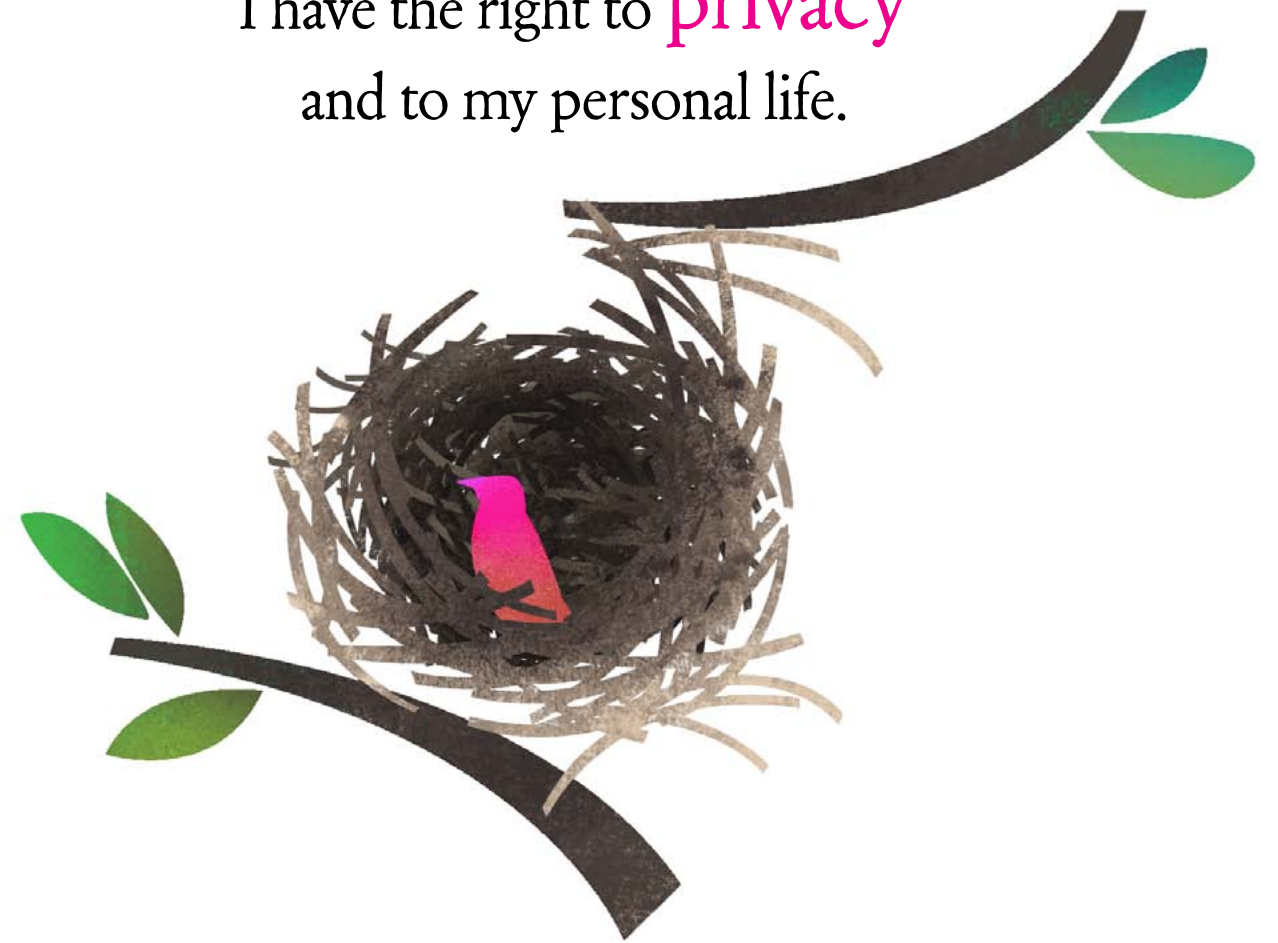
My **dignity** is inviolable.



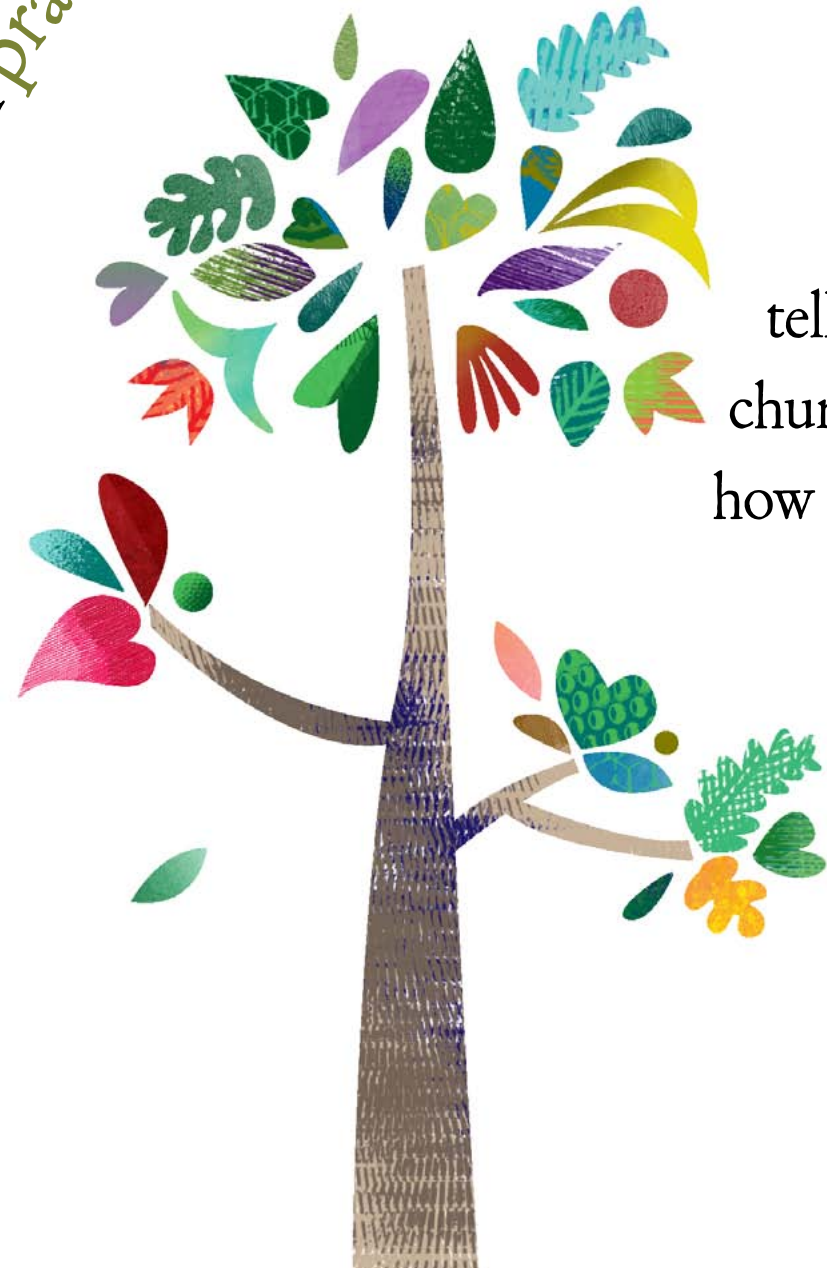


We are **all equal**  
before the law, which is  
why I have the right not  
to be treated differently  
because of my religion,  
my social condition,  
my sex or my way  
of thinking.

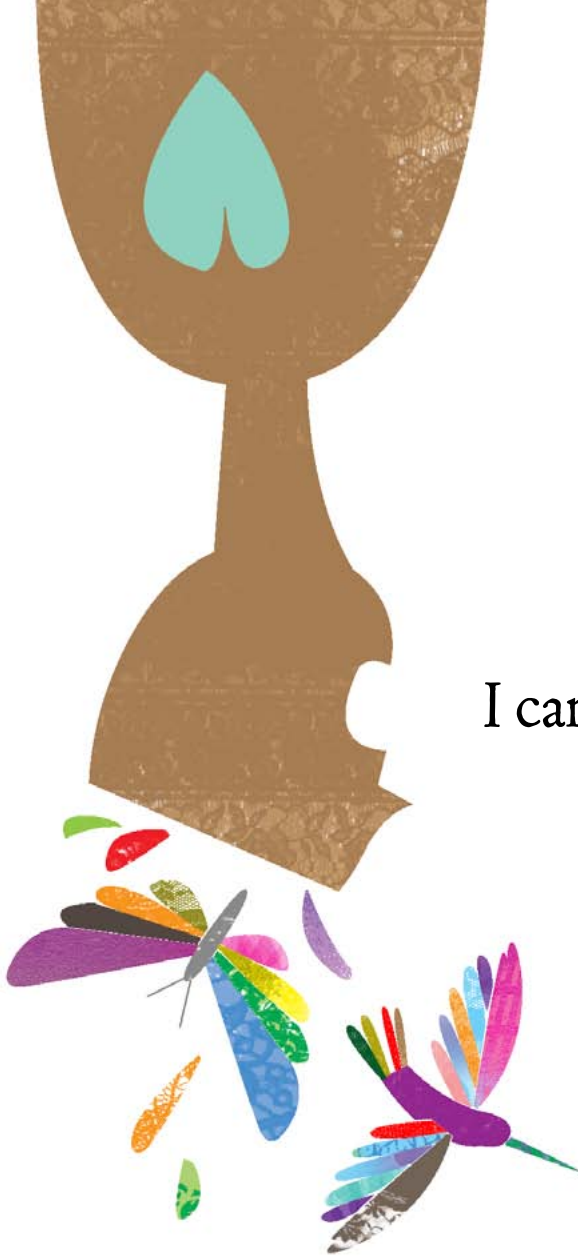
I have the right to **privacy**  
and to my personal life.



*I can practice any religion I want,*



without the  
government  
telling me which  
church to go to or  
how to express my  
beliefs.



I can say whatever

**I think,** how I think it.



No matter if I am rich or  
poor, I have the right to go  
to school, to get  
**an education  
and to develop**  
fully into a responsible  
person who contributes  
to my community.





I am free to meet with other people and to ask the government



to change the things I think are wrong.



I have the right to choose, with my  
vote, the people who govern us. The  
government can't ask me who I voted  
for or tell me how to **vote**.



I have the right  
to **live**, to **be free**  
and to enjoy the things  
that **belong** to me.



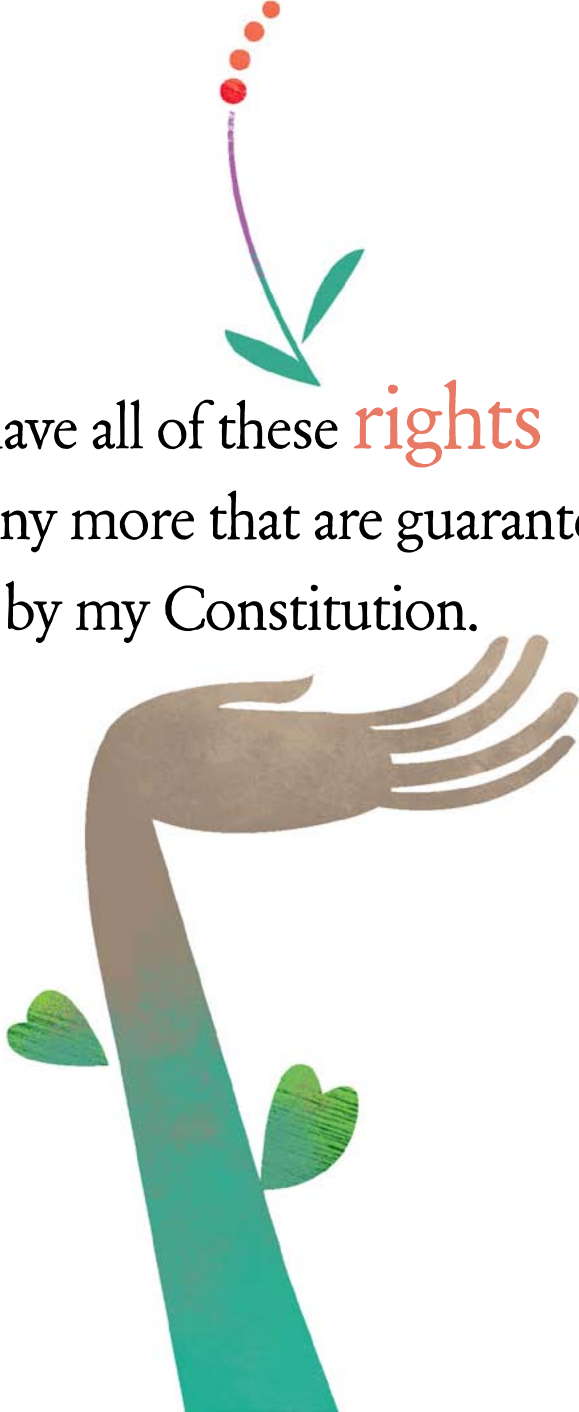
The government cannot punish me  
by taking my life.

Nor can it take **my freedom**  
or the things that belong to me without  
telling me why and giving me  
an opportunity to respond.

The government cannot do this in a way  
that is against the law.



The law must apply  
to me in the same  
way it applies to  
everyone else in my  
same situation.

A stylized illustration of a hand holding a plant stem. The hand is brown and positioned at the top right, with fingers slightly curled. The stem is a thick, teal-colored line that curves downwards and to the left. Two green leaves are attached to the stem, one near the hand and one further down. At the top of the stem, there is a small purple stem with four red dots, resembling a flower or seed head.

I have all of these **rights**  
and many more that are guaranteed  
by my Constitution.

# This is my Bill of Rights

## CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO Article II: Bill of Rights

**Section 1. Human dignity and equality; discrimination prohibited** The dignity of the human being is inviolable. All men are equal before the law. No discrimination shall be made on account of race, color, sex, birth, social origin or condition, or political or religious ideas. Both the laws and the system of public education shall embody these principles of essential human equality.



**Section 2. Suffrage; electoral franchise**

The laws shall guarantee the expression of the will of the people by means of equal, direct and secret universal suffrage and shall protect the citizen against any coercion in the exercise of the electoral franchise.

**Section 3. Freedom of religion**

No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. There shall be complete separation of church and state.

**Section 4. Freedom of speech and press; peaceful assembly; petition for redress of grievances**

No law shall be made abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

**Section 5. Public education**

Every person has the right to an education which shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. There shall be a system of free and wholly non-sectarian public education. Instruction in the elementary and secondary schools shall be free and shall be compulsory in the elementary schools to the extent permitted by the facilities of the state. Compulsory attendance at elementary public schools to the extent permitted by the facilities of the Commonwealth, as herein provided, shall not be construed as applicable to those who receive elementary education in schools established under nongovernmental auspices. No public property or public funds

shall be used for the support of schools or educational institutions other than those of the state. Nothing contained in this provision shall prevent the state from furnishing to any child non-educational services established by law for the protection or welfare of children.

**Section 6. Freedom of organization**

Persons may join with each other and organize freely for any lawful purpose, except in military or quasi-military organizations.



**Section 7. Right to life, liberty, and enjoyment of property; no death penalty; due process; equal protection of laws; impairment of contracts; exemption of property from attachment**

The right to life, liberty and the enjoyment of property is recognized as a fundamental right of man. The death penalty shall not exist. No person shall be deprived of his liberty or property without due process of law. No person in Puerto Rico shall be de-

nied the equal protection of the laws. No laws impairing the obligation of contracts shall be enacted. A minimum amount of property and possessions shall be exempt from attachment as provided by law.

**Section 8.** *Protection against attacks on honor, reputation, and private life*

Every person has the right to the protection of law against abusive attacks on his honor, reputation and private or family life.

**Section 9.** *Just compensation for private property*

Private property shall not be taken or damaged for public use except upon payment of just compensation and in the manner provided by law. No law shall be enacted authorizing condemnation of printing presses, machinery or material devoted to publications of any kind. The buildings in which these objects are

located may be condemned only after a judicial finding of public convenience and necessity pursuant to procedure that shall be provided by law, and may be taken before such a judicial finding only when there is placed at the disposition of the publication an adequate site in which it can be installed and continue to operate for a reasonable time.

**Section 10.** *Searches and seizures; wire-tapping; warrants*

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated.

Wire-tapping is prohibited.

No warrant for arrest or search and seizure shall issue except by judicial authority and only upon probable cause supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched and the persons to be arrested or the things to be seized.

Evidence obtained in violation of this section shall be inadmissible in the courts.

**Section 11.** *Criminal prosecutions; jury trial; self-incrimination; double jeopardy; bail; imprisonment*

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to have a speedy and public trial, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation and to have a copy thereof, to be confronted with the witnesses against him, to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, to have assistance of counsel, and to be presumed innocent.

In all prosecutions for a felony the accused shall have the right of trial by an impartial



jury composed of twelve residents of the district, who may render their verdict by a majority vote which in no case may be less than nine.

No person shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself and the failure of the accused to testify may be neither taken into consideration nor commented upon against him.

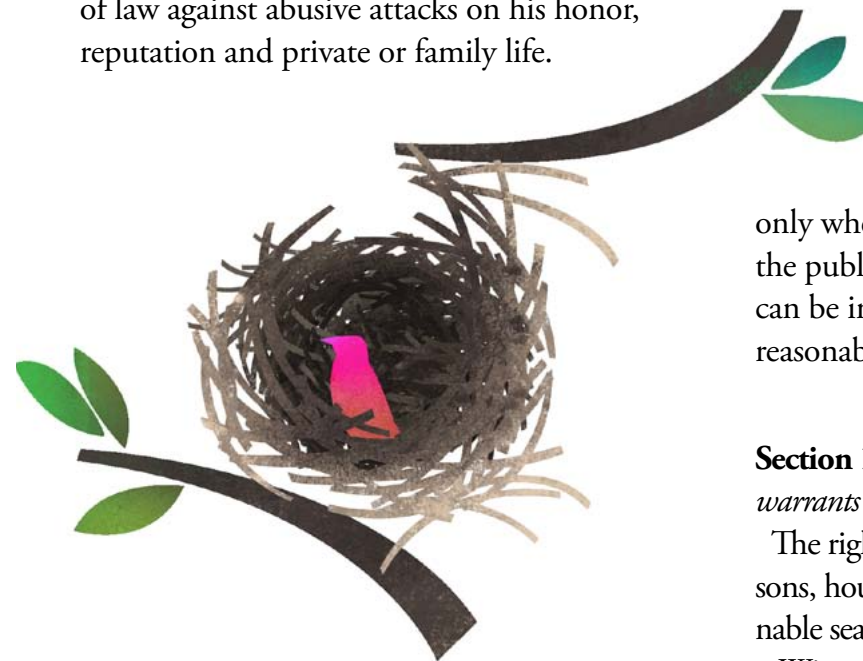
No person shall be twice put in jeopardy of punishment for the same offense.

Before conviction every accused shall be entitled to be admitted to bail.

Incarceration prior to trial shall not exceed six months nor shall bail or fines be excessive. No person shall be imprisoned for debt.

**Section 12.** *Slavery; involuntary servitude; cruel and unusual punishments; civil rights; ex post facto law; bill of attainder*

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist except in the latter case as a punishment for crime after the accused has been duly convicted. Cruel and unusual punishments shall not be inflicted.



Suspension of civil rights including the right to vote shall cease upon service of the term of imprisonment imposed.

No ex post facto law or bill of attainder shall be passed.

**Section 13.** *Habeas corpus; military authority subordinate*

The writ of habeas corpus shall be granted without delay and free of costs.

The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, unless the public safety requires it in case of rebellion, insurrection or invasion. Only the Legislative Assembly shall have the power to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and the laws regulating its issuance.

The military authority shall always be subordinate to civil authority.



**Section 14.** *Titles of nobility; gifts from foreign countries*

No titles of nobility or other hereditary honors shall be granted. No officer or employee of the Commonwealth shall accept gifts, donations, decorations or offices from any foreign country or officer without prior authorization by the Legislative Assembly.

**Section 15.** *Employment and imprisonment of children*

The employment of children less than fourteen years of age in any occupation which is prejudicial to their health or morals or which places them in jeopardy of life or limb is prohibited.

No child less than sixteen years of age shall be kept in custody in jail or penitentiary.



**Section 16.** *Rights of employees*

The right of every employee to choose his occupation freely and to resign therefrom is recognized, as is his right to equal pay for equal work, to a reasonable minimum salary, to protection against risks to his health or person in his work or employment, and to an ordinary workday which shall not exceed eight hours. An employee may work in excess of this daily limit only if he is paid extra compensation as provided by law, at a rate never less than one and one-half times the regular rate at which he is employed.

**Section 17.** *Right to organize and bargain collectively*

Persons employed by private businesses, enterprises and individual employers and by agencies or instrumentalities of the government operating as private businesses or enterprises, shall have the right to organize and to bargain collectively with their employers through representatives of their own free choosing in order to promote their welfare.





**Section 18.** *Right to strike, picket, etc.*

In order to assure their right to organize and to bargain collectively, persons employed by private businesses, enterprises and individual employers and by agencies or instrumentalities of the government operating as private businesses or enterprises, in their direct relations with their own employers shall have the right to strike, to picket and to engage in other legal concerted activities.

Nothing herein contained shall impair the authority of the Legislative Assembly to enact laws to deal with grave emergencies that clearly imperil the public health or safety or essential public services.

**Section 19.** *Liberal construction of rights of people and powers of legislative assembly*

The foregoing enumeration of rights shall not be construed restrictively nor does it contemplate the exclusion of other rights not specifically mentioned which belong to the people in a democracy. The power of the Legislative Assembly to enact laws for the protection of the life, health and general welfare of the people shall likewise not be construed restrictively.

**Section 20.** *Human rights recognized; duty of people and government*

The Commonwealth also recognizes the existence of the following human rights:

The right of every person to receive free elementary and secondary education.

The right of every person to obtain work.

The right of every person to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, and especially to food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.

The right of every person to social protection in the event of unemployment, sickness, old age or disability.

The right of motherhood and childhood to special care and assistance.

The rights set forth in this section are closely connected with the progressive development of the economy of the Commonwealth and require,

for their full effectiveness, sufficient resources and an agricultural and industrial development not yet attained by the Puerto Rican community.

In the light of their duty to achieve the full liberty of the citizen, the people and the government of Puerto Rico shall do everything in their power to promote the greatest possible

expansion of the system of production, to assure the fairest distribution of economic output, and to obtain the maximum understanding between individual initiative and collective cooperation.

The executive and judicial branches shall bear in mind this duty and shall construe the laws that tend to fulfill it in the most favorable manner possible.





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