



*Teaching
Genealogists AI™*
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Spanish Glossary: Puerto Rican Slave Records

Key Terms in the Registro Central de Esclavos and Related Records

Puerto Rican Genealogy Group
Website: <https://puertoricangenealogy.org>

Identity and Status Terms

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
<i>esclavo / esclava</i>	enslaved man / enslaved woman	Legal status before abolition (1873)
<i>liberto / liberta</i>	freed man / freed woman	

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
		Status after abolition; appears in records 1873–1876
<i>libre</i>	free	Used as a qualifier: <i>negro libre</i> (free Black person)
<i>amo / ama</i>	master / mistress	The enslaver; name always recorded in 1872 registry
<i>nombre</i>	name	The given name of the enslaved person
<i>natural de</i>	native of / born in	Place of birth or origin
<i>vecino/a de</i>	resident of	Municipality or town of residence
<i>padres</i>	parents	May record mother, father, or both; often notes <i>desconocidos</i>
<i>desconocidos</i>	unknown	Recorded when parents' names were not known

Family and Civil Status Terms

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
<i>estado civil</i>	marital status	Appears as a column in the 1872 registry
<i>soltero / soltera</i>	unmarried man / unmarried woman	Most common status in the registry
<i>casado / casada</i>	married man / married woman	Marriage among enslaved people was legally complex
<i>viudo / viuda</i>	widower / widow	May indicate a partner who died or was separated
<i>hijo / hija</i>	son / daughter	Used to identify children in family relationships
<i>madre</i>	mother	May appear as <i>madre desconocida</i> (mother unknown)
<i>padre</i>	father	May appear as <i>padre desconocido</i> (father unknown)

Racial Classification Terms

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
<i>negro / negra</i>	Black man / Black woman	Applied by enumerator; not self-identified
<i>pardo / parda</i>	mixed race (lighter complexion)	Common colonial classification for mixed ancestry
<i>mulato / mulata</i>	mixed European and African ancestry	Used in some records; overlaps with <i>pardo</i>
<i>color</i>	complexion	Used in physical descriptions alongside specific terms
<i>criollo / criolla</i>	Creole; born in Puerto Rico	Distinguishes local birth from African-born individuals
<i>bozal</i>	African-born, not yet assimilated	Appears in earlier records; rarer by 1872

Occupational Terms

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
<i>oficio</i>	occupation / trade	Recorded for most adults in the 1872 registry
<i>jornalero / jornalera</i>	day laborer	Most common occupation for field workers
<i>cocinero / cocinera</i>	cook	Domestic work
<i>lavandero / lavandera</i>	launderer	Domestic work
<i>carpintero</i>	carpenter	Skilled trade
<i>labrador</i>	farmer / agricultural laborer	Common in coffee and sugar regions
<i>doméstico / doméstica</i>	domestic servant	Household service
<i>sin oficio</i>	without occupation	Recorded for very young children and elderly

Document and Record Terms

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
<i>registro</i>	registry / register	The official record book
<i>padrón</i>	census list / roll	

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
<i>acta</i>	official record / certificate	General term for population registers Used for birth, marriage, and death records
<i>municipio</i>	municipality / town	The basic geographic unit for record organization
<i>departamento</i>	district	Larger geographic division; the 1872 registry uses districts
<i>hacienda</i>	large agricultural estate	Many enslaved people are identified by hacienda
<i>finca</i>	farm or rural property	Smaller than a hacienda
<i>ingenio</i>	sugar mill	Sugar-producing haciendas; relevant for eastern municipalities

Physical Description Terms

Spanish Term	English Meaning	Notes for Researchers
<i>estatura</i>	height / stature	Recorded as alto (tall), mediano (medium), bajo (short)
<i>color</i>	skin color	Followed by a descriptive term
<i>señas particulares</i>	distinguishing features	Scars, marks, or other identifying characteristics
<i>cicatriz</i>	scar	Often recorded as a distinguishing feature