

“YO MISMA FUÍ MI RUTA”

THE EXPERIENCE OF PUERTO RICAN & LATINA WOMEN



QUE ONDEE SOLA • MARCH 2010 VOL. 38 No. 2

I Was My Own Route / Yo misma fui mi ruta

BY JULIA DE BURGOS

I wanted to be like men wanted me to be:
an attempt at life;
a game of hide and seek with my being.
But I was made of nows,
and my feet level upon the promissory earth
would not accept walking backwards,
and went forward, forward,
mocking the ashes to reach the kiss
of the new paths

At each advancing step on my route forward
my back was ripped by the desperate flapping wings
of the old guard.

But the branch was unpinned forever,
and at each whiplash my look
separated more and more and more from the distant
familiar horizons;
and my face took the expression that came from within,
the defined expression that hinted at a feeling
of intimate liberation;
a feeling that surged
from the balance between my life
and the truth of the kiss of the new paths.

Already my course now set in the present,
I felt myself a blossom of all the soils of the earth,
of the soils without history,
of the soils without a future,
of the soil always soil without edges
of all the men and all the epochs.

And I was all in me as was life in me...

I wanted to be like men wanted me to be:
an attempt at life;
a game of hide and seek with my being.
But I was made of nows;
when the heralds announced me
at the regal parade of the old guard,
the desire to follow men warped in me,
and the homage was left waiting for me.



Born to a poor rural family on February 17, 1922 in Carolina, Puerto Rico, Julia de Burgos is considered one of Puerto Rico's National Poets. She was a school teacher in Puerto Rico as well as member of the pro-independence Nationalist Party. She lived in Cuba for a few years and in New York City she was an editor of an anti-imperialist magazine called Pueblos Hispanos. She added the "de" or "of" before her last name, because she believed that she was property of no man - only she alone belonged to herself. She died in New York on July 6, 1953.

Editor-in-Chief & Designer

Xavier "Xavi" Luis Burgos

Copy Editor

Marla Mojica

Staff Writers

Michael Rivera

Ashley Arce

Jessie Fuentes

Ruthy Venegas

Puerto Rican/ Latina Women

- 4 Women's Participation in the Puerto Rican National Liberation Struggle
- 14 My Puerto Rican Abuela
- 16 Celebrating Latina Women
- 18 ¿Qué es eso de los monólogos de la vagina?
- 20 Abuela's Kitchen
- 21 Breast Cancer Among Latinas

Arte & Comunidad

- 22 Poetry Night at Batey Urbano

Front Cover Art Work by:

Wilfredo "Wil" Vélez

A senior in the Art Department at NEIU, you can find more of his work at: <http://wilvelezart.com>

Misión

Que Ondee Sola was established in 1972 and remains the oldest Puerto Rican & Latina/o university student publication in the U.S. Our mission is to provide the NEIU community with a relevant and engaging publication that deals with student issues with a focus on Puerto Ricans and Latinas/os, our communities, and our *patrias*.

Que Ondee Sola continues to affirm the right of Puerto Rican self-determination, freedom for all Puerto Rican political prisoners, and support for a truly participatory democracy.

Que Ondee Sola

is published at Northeastern Illinois University. The opinions expressed in Que Ondee Sola do not necessarily reflect those of the Administration. Responsibility for its contents lies solely with the staff.

We appreciate and encourage suggestions and contributions.

Contact Que Ondee Sola
5500 N. St. Louis Chicago, IL 60625

Room E-041
(773) 442-4583

queondeesola@gmail.com

Women's Participation in the Puerto Rican National Liberation Struggle

The following is an excerpt of the introduction from the book, Puerto Rican Women: A history of Oppression and Resistance, which explains the role women have played in Puerto Rican history during the last 500 years from a revolutionary and socialist perspective. The book was published in the early 1980s by the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (M.L.N.), an organization that began in Chicago in 1977 as a coalition of Puerto Rican independence activists and Mexican activists that supported the independence of Puerto Rico and the reunification of México. The organization dissolved in the early 1990s.

Puerto Rico is an archipelago and is the smallest of the greater Antilles. Its people, its culture, its national identity are the by-product of three distinct peoples.

On November 19, 1493, during his second voyage Columbus landed on the island. The conquest of the island, however, did not begin until 1508 when Ponce de León was licensed to begin the settlement of the island. At that time the island was inhabited by the Taíno Indians, a people who spoke the Arawak language. They outnumbered approximately 100,000 and lived in a society that can be characterized as semi-primitive communism. In other words, class distinctions were not that obvious. Taíno society was basically a matrilineal society in which power was inherited through the mother line. Therefore, in Taíno society, the woman played a very significant

role and perhaps a dominant role, due to the fact that she was exclusively involved in the most important part of production, agriculture. Only women were allowed to cultivate the land. With the conquest the triple oppression of the Taíno woman and her descendants began.

The Indians waged a very bloody resistance against the Spaniards in Puerto Rico. An anecdote serves to illustrate this initial phase of struggle. The Spaniards disembarked on the western coast of the island, occupied various points and subjected the Taíno Indians to slavery. One of the Indian chiefs, Urayoan, decided to conduct an experiment to prove the vulnerability of the Spaniards who had spread the myth of their invincibility among the Indians, making the Indians believe that they died and three days later, came to life again. Urayoan decided to put this belief to the test. He waited until one of the Spaniards moved from one site to another and, from among his tribe, he selected a group of his best men and ordered them to drown Salcedo, the Spaniard captain, in the river. After they drowned the Spaniard, the Indians waited for three days. When the three days were up, and they raised the cadaver out of the water, they proved that the Spaniards were mortal. They organized a rebellion in which the main chiefs participated. It was during this open rebellion against the Spaniards that the first Puerto Rican Indian heroine, Guanina, distinguished herself.

The Indians were no match for the Spanish regiments which were veterans of wars and possessed superior war materials. According to Spanish history, the death of Agüeybana, the Indian rebellion ended, but guerilla struggled continued from the other islands, particularly Vieques. The Taíno pursued their resistance well into the 17th century, thus earning the name of Caribe (flesh-eaters).

In order to replace the Indian labor force which they could no longer control, since many of them fled to the mountains, Black slavery was introduced. With the advent of slavery, another important ethnic element was brought into Puerto Rico: the African, who was responsible for a series of slave rebellions that occurred sporadically from the 16th century to the second half of the 19th century, when slavery was abolished.

The rebellious Indians, the runaway slaves, and the poor discontented Spaniards joined together and mixed freely in the island's interior. From these emerged a new woman and a new man, the jíbaro(a). The society that this new personality created can be characterized as a community of squatter subsistence farming. In this society men and women engaged in the production process. It was an egalitarian society in which no classes existed.

Increasingly, however, as reforms were brought about during the age of the Spanish Enlightenment the society began to enter a new mode of production, one that could be called a semi-capitalist mode of production. Plantations began to emerge on a large scale. The lands occupied by the jíbaro, which were

legally called *Hatos de Rey* or *Crown Land*, began to be taken over by the planter class. A sophisticated small creole elite emerged. Class differences began to clearly come to the fore. A clear distinction could now be made between the rising elite (bourgeoisie) woman and jíbara. The Criolla imitated Spain and Europe, the jíbara identified with the land.

During the early part of the 19th century class contradictions took hold. The Creoles, for the most part, began to identify with the rising ideology of liberalism, while the Spanish residents on the island who were the true ruling class, clearly identified themselves with reaction.

Liberalism slowly grew in Puerto Rico and flowed in two directions – those who sought change within the system – the reformists, and those who sought to alter the system completely – the radicals. The first stirrings of radicalism were to be found among a small group who followed closely the events of the independence movement in Spanish America and were led by **María Mercedes Barbudo**. The brave woman, who led the first independence conspiracy in the 1820's, was jailed in the Morro prison in San Juan and later exiled to Cuba, for conspiring against the government of Spain and for her ties with the Venezuelan revolutionaries who projected the liberation of the country under the leadership of the Puerto Rican general Antonio de Valero, a member of Liberator Simón Bolívar's general command.

By the mid 1820's, the nascent liberal movement has dealt a retarding blow by the Spanish reactionary movement, led by

Miguel de la Torre. The resistance continued, but now its leadership was in the hands of the freed and enslaved Blacks.

The conspiratorial slave plots were limited to specific geographical regions and were often detected and crushed. As many as forty slave revolts were recorded in Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, these slave revolts established two traditions that had great impact on the future course of Puerto Rico – (1) the inseparability of the social question of the abolition of slavery from the political question of independence. This can be clearly demonstrated in the famous statement by the great Puerto Rican patriot Segundo Ruíz Belvis who in 1867 said *“I don’t want political reforms for the whites until the blacks are free”* and (2) the injection of conspiratorial thinking into the independence movement. These two traditions would form the content and character of the radical national liberation movement led by the patriot Ramón Emeterio Betances, which reached its Zenith in the Grito de Lares on September 23, 1868. There is no event in the 19th century that better exemplifies the role of the Puerto Rican woman as a revolutionary



than the Grito de Lares.

Mariana Bracetti was born in Añasco in 1843. She was known by her comrades and people in general as “Golden Arm” because of her revolutionary bravery and fervor. She designed and sewed the flag that was unfurled in the Lares rebellion in 1868.

As a result of her participation in el Grito de Lares she was imprisoned in the Arecibo jail for many years where she gave birth and lost her son.

Another heroine was **Lola Rodríguez de Tió**, who was born in San Germán in 1843. She studied in her native city and was an active conspirator for Puerto Rico’s independence, both in her own country and wherever she lived as a political exile, in Cuba, Venezuela, and New York. She was outstanding in struggles which Cuba and Puerto Rico waged for their liberation. She wrote the words of Puerto Rico’s national anthem, which has become a banner for our entire people and for the patriotic as well as revolutionary forces.



Among other outstanding fighters for our national liberation during and after the Lares Rebellion were Rosa Medina, Josefa, Mercedes and Anita Méndez, Obdulia Serrano and her

sisters Genoveva Conrada, Osoria and Isabel. Ana María Laborde, Petra Bruckman, Sandalia Cardona, Dolores Cos, all who were declared conspirators committed to the revolution. To this list must be added the humble peasants whose names will never be known, and the unknown wives, daughters, mothers and sisters of the people who fought in the revolutionary lines and who distinguished themselves in the partidos sediciosos (secret societies), which clandestinely carried on the struggle after the Lares rebellion until the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898. As a matter of fact among 200 revolutionary groupings that operated in Puerto Rico in that year, one was a women's group called "Las Panchas."

Before the invasion, Puerto Rico was well into its development as a capitalist society and an emergent labor movement influenced by the idea of anarcho-syndicalism had begun. The great organizer of the first national workers organization was none other than the legendary Luisa Capetillo.

Luisa Capetillo was born in Arecibo in 1880. She distinguished herself by her participation in the creation of the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores (Free Federation of Workers). In her writings and her speeches, she advocated socialism, human

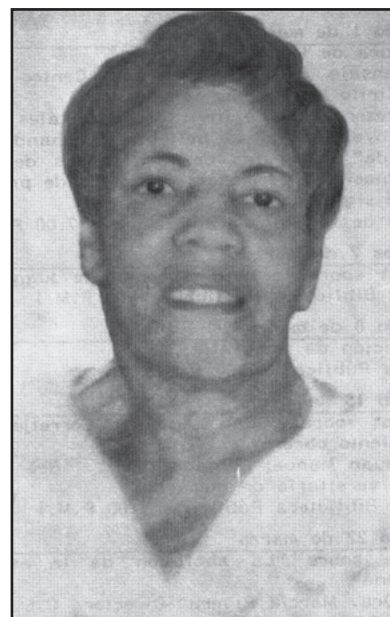


emancipation, equal rights for women, and universal education. Luisa Capetillo travelled through the Caribbean, particularly to Cuba, where in 1913 she was arrested for publicly wearing men's attire.

At the beginning of the 19th century, a great number of workers forces were made up of women, who were exploited as coffeehouse waitresses and tobacco strippers. In the combative struggles of these sectors of the Puerto Rican working class, innumerable women formed a part of our people's history of struggle. One of these was Juana Colón.

Juana Colón,

known as the Joan of Arc of Comerío, was born in 1875 in Río Hondo. She was very young when Puerto Rico was invaded by United States troops. Her job was that of a washer woman. When she lost her husband she



was left with nine small children. She was a pioneer in the struggle for social rights of the Puerto Rican working class. She led strikes and fought the police in the tobacco strippers' movement in her town. For defending the interests of her class she suffered repression and was jailed on several occasions. She was founder of the Socialist Party of that period in Comerío.

The reason that women such as Luisa Capetillo and Juana Colón could emerge as leaders in a movement that has traditionally been led by men can be attributed to the fact that after the U.S. invasion the whole Puerto Rican economy was transformed and undermined. Thousands of people were forced from their lands to shanty towns on the outskirts of the City. As a matter of fact, by 1930, 60% of Puerto Rico's arable land was under the control of four U.S. corporations. Increasingly, Puerto Rico moved from a semi-capitalist mode of production to a full-fledged colonial dependent capitalist economy where the overwhelming bulk of the population became workers. Therefore, at a very early stage of this century Puerto Rican women became very actively engaged in the productive process of society. For example, by 1915, thousands of women began to be employed in the tobacco processing plant and in the needle industry.

By the 1930's conditions in Puerto Rico had become so deplorable that thousands of Puerto Ricans began their mass migration to the United States. The Puerto Rican woman, being more skilled, found jobs in the sweat-shops of New York. Puerto Rican women became "las operarias." The garment industry became our haven and our hell. Long hours, miserable wages, closed shops or later unions which only represented the interest of management, racism, and always the sexual abuses by the boss. Increasingly the Puerto Rican woman became the head of the household, since in many cases it became impossible for the men to find jobs. Adding the dissent in the family to America's racism, economic exploitation, and spiraling

unemployment, the Puerto Rican family soon became the victim of the American welfare system.

The Puerto Rican forced migration has to be seen as part of a greater scheme by U.S. imperialism to depopulate and denationalize our homeland. One of the gravest concerns of the U.S. has been the growing population of Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico (approximately 4 million) and now in the U.S. (approximately 4 million). This is the greatest threat to the domination of our homeland. Unemployment at home (officially around 20%, unofficially 45%), and in the U.S. (officially 9%, unofficially near 20%), the extremely high cost of living, the flagrant police repression and outright murder of our people, both on the island and in the cities of the U.S., are once more creating the conditions for revolution. Since the 1950's the yanqui government has met such threats with yet another plan to reduce our numbers. This time the plan seems of a more permanent character. In the words of "Che Guevara," "It is easier to kill a guerilla in the womb than on the battlefield." This correctly describes the intent of the yanqui campaign of sterilization.

The massive sterilization plan goes back to 1925 when a birth control campaign was begun with a massive experimentation, with contraceptives on women in rural towns and areas of the interior of the island; it continued up to 1932. In 1936 Governor Blanton Winship of the U.S. officially incorporated family planning programs, but the hierarchy of the U.S. Catholic Church pressured the U.S. Congress against the plan. In order to relieve the federal government from implementing

the program, the colonial legislature in 1937 authorized a massive project of population control. W.W. II saved the government from the need to devote efforts to family planning until 1946. During that year, the Popular Democratic Party, then in power, began a new campaign and created the Association of Population Studies which, in 1954, became the Puerto Rican Family Welfare Association. The program was extended and sustained mainly by donations from U.S. individuals who provided the basic support until 1966. This money made it possible to offer “educational” material and medically supervised contraceptive services, to carry out a series of studies that included experiments with the contraceptive pill Enovid, and to implement a broad plan for sterilizing women and men. Since 1966, the Association has had financing from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. According to the government figures on sterilization, more than 33% of the feminine population of child-bearing age had been sterilized by 1974. 35 percent of the Puerto Rican population of reproducing age used some type of contraceptive service. During fiscal year 1974-75 alone, the governmental budget for the massive sterilization program was \$6 million, and more than 300 sterilizations a month were done on women of child-bearing age. At the present, the sterilization figure is 45%.

So-called “family planning” is only one of the many effective and silent genocidal weapons. Chemical genocide is used to quietly murder our people. We become heroin, methadone and alcohol victims. The government murders our future generations with sterilizations. It maims our children with drugged childbirths

and chronic, severe malnutrition. It has been scientifically proven that obstetric medications, which are given more routinely and in higher dosage to Puerto Rican, Black, ChicanaMexicana, and Native women, cause brain damage, learning disabilities, and behavior problems. Malnutrition itself is more important a factor in learning than either family or social background.

Cultural genocide strips us of our national identity by breaking down our language and our traditions. The colonialist system of education enslaves our minds and conditions us to feel inferior. However, throughout the centuries of exploitation, the most vicious blow have been to the family unit. All over the effect of economic exploitation, social and sexual discrimination has been to incite violence within the family and alienation between men and women. The aggressor nations have constantly undermined not only the respect between men and women, but also the respect of children for their parents and nations. Consequently our youth are filled with confusion and self-hate. This leaves them vulnerable to the arsenal of genocidal tactics employed by imperialist nations.

Since the 1950's, Puerto Rican women in the U.S. have begun to wage struggle against the imperialist assault. In her poetry, **Julia de Burgos** expressed our cry for justice:

*“When the multitudes run madly
leaving behind the ashes of burnt injustices,
and when with the torch of the seven virtues,
after the seven sins the multitudes run,
against you,
and against all that is unjust and inhumane,*

I, too, will be among them with the candle-wood torch in my hand."



In the 1960's, many women joined the Welfare Rights Movement, the Young Lords Party, and a number of Puerto Rican student groups. In the 1970s, women joined the campaigns to free the Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners of War and the growing resistance against the yanquis. At present, Puerto Rican women in the United States participate in all levels of revolutionary work, including clandestine organizations waging armed struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico.

All over the world oppressed women are moving to the forefront of the liberation struggles for self-determination. Imperialism is the enemy of all women. It is clear that our role must be complemented and not competitive against our brother. Women have always participated in the struggles against

repression, and as we see imperialism losing its ground around the world, we must organize and heighten our participation to insure defeat of a system, "where work is a necessary evil, rather than useful production in a sane society."

The Puerto Rican woman has been present throughout the struggle for national liberal, as we have already seen. The armed movement for liberation has also seen women in leadership roles. **Blanca Canales** for



example, led the armed column in Jayuya and on October 30, 1950 proclaimed the Republic of Puerto Rico. She was sentenced to life, served 17 years in federal and state prisons, and was released in 1967. She lives in Puerto Rico, a revolutionary example for all women in struggle.

Soon after the revolt, over 3,000 people were rounded up in jail; many of them were women. Despite this attempt to silence the independence movement in 1954, the bullets of freedom were once again heard in Puerto Rico. Three brave women were **Doris Torresola, Carmine Pérez**, a

woman who was imprisoned and harassed for nearly 20 years in the island's rotten colonial jails, and **Isabel Rosado**. At the age



of 76, this heroic combatant continues to occupy the front line of the struggle. In May 1979, she was one of the 21 people arrested for protesting the U.S. Navy occupation of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Perhaps the best known symbol of Puerto Rican women in struggle for our dignity and equality is **Lolita Lebrón**, a Puerto Rican woman, worker, mother and revolutionary who sacrificed her life for the independence of Puerto Rico. On March 1, 1954, she and her compañeros Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores, and Andres Figueroa Cordero entered the House of Representatives, armed, to bring the Puerto Rican independence struggle to the attention

of the world. Lolita Lebrón explained her action in this way:

"The events that led to my decision to participate in and to personally command Puerto Rico's liberation attack on the Capitol and Congress of the U.S.A., are, each and every one of the offensive actions, committed by the U.S.A. against Puerto Rico's inalienable right to sovereignty. By the 1st of March, 1954, Puerto Rico had been struggling for liberation against political empires for more than a century. I would like to state further than although my life as a political prisoner has had great tragedy, it has made me the happiest woman in the world. People believe that to liberate a country is a sin. Of course, the U.S.A. says that to the people of the world, right? They call me a terrorist, you see? I could have been out of here a long time ago if I would say to the U.S.A. that I was very sorry for what I did. I am not! I am a woman, and I participated as that, and it was Don Pedro Albizu Campos who nominated me to represent this, and I led, and I think that was the greatest



privilege that any revolutionary woman in the whole planet in this atomic age has ever had, or could have."

A new generation of Puerto Rican women fighters in the struggle for national

liberation are today inspired by the example of these great women of the 1950's particularly Lolita Lebrón, Blanca Canales, and Isabel Rosado.

In 1971, for example, in a violent confrontation of the students in Puerto Rico, a young Puerto Rican student, **Antonia Martínez** became the first martyr of the Puerto Rican struggle in the decade of the 70's.

In the mid 1970's the U.S. used the Grand Jury as an arm of the F.B.I. in another attempt to stifle Puerto Rican liberation. Women played a decisive role in the resistance to the Grand Jury system by refusing to collaborate with an investigation that was geared to discredit and destroy the Puerto Rican independence movement and those who support it in the ChicanoMexicano movement. Women like Myrna Salgado, Raisa Nemikin, a Venezuelan and María Cueto, a ChicanaMexicana, served over 10 months in prison. Earlier, Lureida Torres served four months for non-collaborating with the Grand Jury. Now María Cueto and Puerto Rican and ChicanoMexicano compañeros Steven Guerra, Julio and Andres Rosado and Ricardo Romero face jail terms for refusing to testify before yet another Grand Jury intruding into the independence movement. Women's resistance has always played an important role in the continued struggle for the liberation of Puerto Rico.

Some women have had to go into clandestinity because they have been declared criminals by the yanqui government for their participation in armed struggle. Women like



Ida Luz Rodríguez and **María Haydee Torres** lived underground since 1976. Haydee was pregnant when forced underground and had to bear her child under some of the worst conditions. Since 1970, over 400 independentistas have been incarcerated in Puerto Rico, accused of involvement in armed actions against U.S. imperialism. The mounting repression in Puerto Rico, and against Puerto Rican communities in the United States, clearly points to the fact that the independence movement poses one of the most significant threats to U.S. imperialist plans, both within and outside the borders of this country. A clear example of this is when Nydia Cuevas, and her comrade Pablo Marcano García seized the Chilean Consulate in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on July 3, 1978, demanding independence, freedom for the Nationalist Prisoners of War, an end to the July 4 celebrations, and in solidarity with the Chilean people's resistance to the fascist dictatorship in Chile. Nydia and Pablo were sentenced to seven and twelve years in prison. Nydia was sent to prison in California, 4000 miles from

her homeland, in an effort to isolate her. She has recently been moved to a maximum-security prison in Alderson, West Virginia.

The current situation in Vieques is yet another clear example. Since 1941 the people of Vieques have resisted U.S. military occupation for their tiny island. The U.S. military has raped women and maimed men and children with their bombs. In their confrontation with the U.S. in Vieques, the people have risked their lives. In May, 1979, 21 persons were arrested in Vieques for demonstrating and “trespassing on federal property.” Of the 21, five were women. Among them was Doña Isabel Rosado, age 76, the former Nationalist prisoner who spent 17 years in jail for alleged terrorist actions in the 1950 Jayuya Revolt. She was beaten by the military. Lourdes Santana, a member of the Liga Socialista Puertorriqueña (L.S.P.), spent four months in prison, and was the last of the Vieques 21 to be released. When arrested, she refused to participate in the federal trial, arguing that the U.S. had no jurisdiction over Puerto Ricans. We point out that another member of the L.S.P., Angel Rodríguez Cristobal, was tortured and murdered by the U.S. government on November 11, 1979, while imprisoned for the Vieques demonstration. He was the first to be imprisoned, sentenced to six months at Tallahassee, Florida, for refusing to recognize U.S. jurisdiction over Puerto Rico and taking a position as a prisoner of war. Angel is survived by his militant wife Socorro, who has continued the work he left behind.

On April 4, 1980, Eleven Puerto Rican Prisoners of War were captured in Evanston, Illinois and accused of membership in the

F.A.L.N., an armed clandestine organization fighting inside U.S. borders for Puerto Rican independence. One of the Eleven, Haydee Torres, said:

“As a woman, as a Puerto Rican woman in the struggle for independence, when I fight I see myself as much more of a human being than I do as a woman. I do not think that you have to be a certain sex to be a revolutionary. In Puerto Rico, women have always been an integral part of the struggle. It is my right, it is my duty, to do whatever is humanely possible for me to do and if losing my life is part of that struggle then I will, I will do it. I think that in fighting together – I think that in standing side by side with my compañeros – that I have done a lot more for the equality of women. We can say that in fighting together to rid our society of the inequalities that exists, we are also combating one of those very inequalities in the process. And when we fight, we learn something about ourselves, so that when we build something new, it is going to be built differently. It is going to be just, and it is going to be honestly human.”

The Eleven refused to accept U.S. jurisdiction over their actions to win independence for Puerto Rico, and demanded their rights under international law to be treated as Prisoners of War. Currently serving terms in prison of up to 90 years, the five women and six men of the Prisoners of War set a leading example of the Puerto Rican people at war against the system of U.S. imperialism....

*"Palo que nace dobla'o, jamás su tronco
endereza
Lleva eso en la cabeza,
que ella solía decir
Dime con quien andas, y te diré quien tu
eres
Ten cuidado mi nietecito,
cuídate de las mujeres.
Ojo por ojo, diente por diente
Ay que el corazón es ciego
y también es mucha gente
Coje consejo, llegar a viejo
Escucha bien mi consejo
para que llegues a viejo. "*

"Palo que nace" by Hector Lavoe



"Palo que nace:" The Story of my Puerto Rican Abuela

In the Latina/o culture *"la abuela"* is an honored position. Latina grandmothers are usually expected to help raise grandchildren from birth. From personal experience there is no other person better to do so. My grandmother Zoraida Cotto made me the strong, young Latina women I am today. Growing up, I've always looked up to her and admired her strength. I, mostly, admire her because of the circumstances she grew up in, which made her a strong and independent woman today.

My grandmother was born in Caguas, Puerto Rico in 1951. She grew up with a very big family. Her and her twenty-one brothers and sisters had to share everything. "Four of us slept in one bed. If my parents didn't have

a gift for everyone, none of us got anything. Fridays, my father would bring a big bag full of candy for all. It was great." Growing up, she always wanted to learn more. She wanted to get out and experience bigger and better things, especially Chicago. "When I was growing up, my father listened to the Chicago Cubs ball games on the radio; I wanted to see Chicago ever since." Her mother taught her to work hard and be self-sufficient. She was also taught to have faith in the Lord. She began working at the age of sixteen. "My first job was in Puerto Rico. I was sixteen and told them I was eighteen. I did get the job, wrapping men's underwear in plastic. For a year, I was going to work and school. It was very hard to do both."

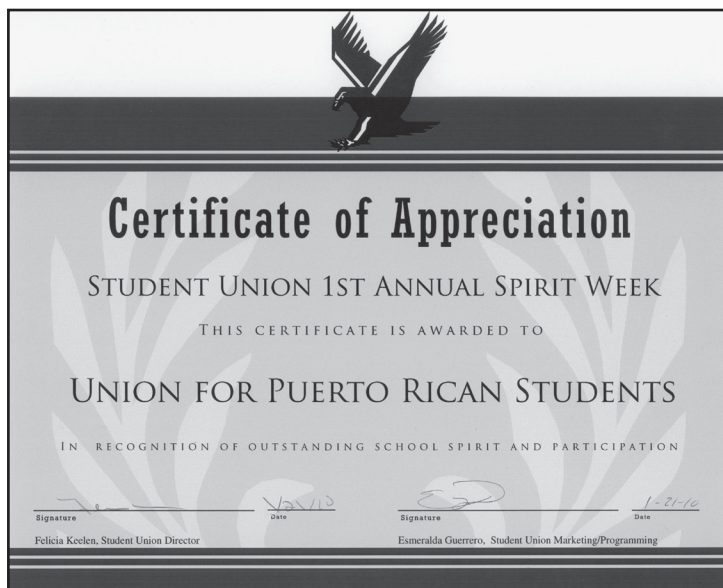
She came over to Chicago, in the early 70's,

after my mother was born. While over here, she took it upon herself to become a stronger, better woman. "I made a choice to be better. I didn't want to be another casualty." She started off by learning English and how to travel on CTA buses. At one point, she was attending school and working. "I started to go to school, and my case worker said if I finish college she would hire me as a case worker, but my husband had the idea women belonged in the kitchen, at the time." So she wasn't offered the position. While she lived in Chicago, she met all types of people good and bad. She learned that not everyone is nice and not everything people say is true. "I was very lucky in my life..." Police also added struggle in the early 70's. It were these racist's authorities that couldn't accept the changes in the Humboldt Park area. "Getting respect from anyone in Chicago was a struggle. There was a lot of violence from the police; whites just didn't want to accept the changes in the neighborhood."

Being married and having kids made it hard for my grandmother to pursue many of her

dreams and aspirations. She still always tried to instill values in her children as well as her grandchildren. She wanted her children to receive the education she never had and to carry out the family values, which are always supporting each other like her mother did with her and her siblings. "I wanted my children to have the education, so they can work and have good paying jobs... The only way to get back at people when they think you will not be any better than your parents is [through] education and good karma. Also knowing when to listen and knowing when to just let go and learn from your mistakes."

My grandmother most definitely has played a very important role in my life. Her love and wise words gives me the strength not only to pursue my education, but to have faith in the Lord and to work hard. Because of her, I never limit myself to opportunities. She encourages me to do my best. I encourage myself to make her proud just as she made me proud to be her granddaughter. She is not only the definition of a good grandmother, but strong Latina woman.





30% of it by 2050, and Latino/a children below the age of 5 will account for more than half of all American children by just 2023.

With such a burden (and godsent) on her hands, the Latina must become more responsible than ever. She must not lose the core traits that have made Latinos distinct: hard work, integrity, and service. She must not forget her ancestors—that rich line that, through trial and error and triumph and tragedy, produced her. She must raise her children (and teach her family) to be the cream of the world's harvest and to be the best at whatever they do. She must be simply, precisely, and perfectly what she is: a Latina.

Latina, Pa'Lante: Celebrating Our Women

My mom didn't have to leave Dominican Republic and traverse a world to get here. She didn't have to provide me with an opportunity for success inexistent in the native land. Yet she did. And here I am.

Among Latina women, my mom is no exception. Millions have done this and do this every year. The Latina, in essence, has become the quintessential immigrant: she comes in higher numbers than women of other ethnic backgrounds, and she comes with her children. In many ways, she reflects what America's future generations look like. According to the U.S. Census, the number of minorities in the U.S. will trump the number of white Americans by mid-century. The Census has found more revealing details: Latino/a Americans, which currently account for 15% of the U.S. population, will grow to account

While Latinas must be proud of whom they are, arrogance must play no part in them and their mission. It forms complacency and satisfaction, two things which the Latina must resist daily in order to meet her obligations to the community and her family. The time is ripe for the Latina to shed old skeletons and hail a new, transformative life free of false labels of self-worth. The highest calling of all is that which is completely and categorically selfless.

On August 6, 2009, Sonia Sotomayor, a Puerto Rican from the Bronx, was made a Supreme Court Justice. In Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner rules over one of the largest Spanish-speaking nations. If we peer into the past, we can find a Nobel Prize winner in the poet Gabriela Mistral and a literary pioneer in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. But these are only four examples; the true

number of exceptional Latinas is too great to include them all here. The lives of these giants can serve to remind Latinas of their own greatness.

I trust that the Latina has recognized her place in the world and is ready to move it forward. It's not like the weight of the world is upon her shoulders, but her role on its stage—more heroic than ever—has increased, and untold billions of destinies lay in her hand. Her imperative will now be the world's agenda, her influence will form its vital foundation, and her individual calling will be more important than ever. To call for Latinas to unite is useless;

by simply being who they are and following their unique spirits, Latinas will collectively bring a higher meaning and purpose to the world.

The Latina, then, is a global entity. It follows that her self-awareness, too, takes on a global perspective. I don't know if my mom has ever looked at herself through a global lens, but she certainly acted as if she had by bringing me here. Maybe the ironic loophole in all of this is that if the Latina remains precisely and perfectly what she is, and doesn't try being anything else, her actions will positively impact the world despite her conscious awareness of



Certificate of Appreciation

STUDENT UNION 1ST ANNUAL SPIRIT WEEK

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

QUE ONDEE SOLA

IN RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SPIRIT AND PARTICIPATION

Signature

Felicia Keelen, Student Union Director

Date

10/10

Signature

Esmeralda Guerrero, Student Union Marketing/Programming

Date

1-21-10

Que Ondee Sola



¿Qué es eso de los monólogos de la vagina?



“¿Qué es eso de los monólogos de la vagina?” (“What is this thing called the Vagina Monologues?”) This was the first thing my mom asked me when I told her I was going to be part of the Vagina Monologues. When I was first introduced to the Vagina Monologues, I did not know exactly what it was. Soon I discovered that the Vagina Monologues is a worldwide movement to end violence against women by raising funds and awareness through a playwright by Eve Ensler’s. The playwright consists of monologues of interviews done with women about their life experiences on sexual assault, rape, sexual slavery...etc. I found this to be a very powerful movement, and I decided to join it by being part of the Vagina Monologues. However, I have to admit that in the beginning, there were personal challenges that I needed to overcome: one was to be up on stage reading a monologue and the second was

to say the word “vagina” not to mention the moans we needed to do, too. Being surrounded by strong women made this challenge less difficult for me. I managed to be comfortable and confident in performing my part. However, I really wished my mom could have seen me perform. Unfortunately, in México the Vagina Monologues are not very well known, this is why my mom did not understand what I was going to be a part of. I was determined to show her what it was. I came up with a great idea, which was to go on youtube and find videos in Spanish about the Vagina Monologues. It was not long until she said “*¡Cochina! ¿Qué es eso?*” (“Pig, what is that?”) I tried to explain it to her, and encourage her to go see me. Although I tried many alternatives off explaining it to her, she did not attend.

Being part of the Vagina Monologues was

a great experienced, it enlightened me and showed me how powerful a show like this can be. Being part of this show has met all my objectives, I overcame my fears of being on stage and advocated for women who have been victims of violence. The entire cast was able to raise consciousness on women's issues in one night, which is amazing to me. I enjoyed being part of this show so much that I will be part of it again this year. This year the Vagina Monologues will take place on March

9 in the Auditorium at Northeastern Illinois University from 7:00pm-8:30pm. I encourage everyone to come see it, and I guarantee you will have fun and will learn something new. As for my mom, there will always be another time to convince her to come see me. And who knows, maybe you will see me in México performing the Vagina Monologues one day. And my mom will enjoy it and tell me she would like to be part of it too!



Certificate of Appreciation

STUDENT UNION 1ST ANNUAL SPIRIT WEEK

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

UPRS & QOS

1ST PLACE (GOLD)

Signature

Felicia Keelen, Student Union Director

Date

4/21/10

Signature

Esmeralda Guerrero, Student Union Marketing/Programming

Date

4-21-10

Abuela's Kitchen

Arroz con Dulce: Sweet Rice Pudding, Puerto Rican style!

Nothing is better than to indulge yourself with some Arroz con Dulce while dancing with the family to Son by Four, “*Y las noches me saben A puro dolor...*” A delicious complimentary with Arroz con Dulce is a nice glass of Coquito, not too much unless you want to find yourself sleeping on a hammock outside, *y hace demasi'o de frío!* Arroz Con Dulce is usually a dessert, even though everyone eats it before and after a meal. There are tons of different ways to make sweet rice pudding. Some places such as Normandy and Perú either make it with cocoa powder, lemon zest or even an orange peel, either way it is still delicious and my abuela makes the best. *Buen Provecho!*

Ingredients:

- 1 -cups rice
- 4 - cups coconut milk
- 1 -teaspoons salt
- 3 -cinnamon sticks
- 2 -ounces ginger
- 6 -whole cloves
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 1 -cups sugar
- cup raisins
- 3/4 cup coconut milk (reserve to use at the end)

Wash rice and soak in water to cover, generously, for 2 hours. The rice will soak up the water so use plenty.

About twenty minutes before rice is finished

soaking combine the 4 cups of coconut milk, salt, cinnamon, ginger, cloves and nutmeg in a medium size caldero.

Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to moderate, cover and boil for 15 minutes. Drain rice thoroughly and add to caldero. Mix and bring to a boil over moderate heat. Reduce heat to low and cook until rice is completely dry, without stirring.

Add the sugar and raisins, stir, and bring to a boil over moderate heat. Reduce heat to low and cook for another 15 minutes, without stirring.

Add reserved 3/4 cup coconut milk and stir. Turn heat to moderate and boil for about 30 minutes, or until rice dries again. In this cooking period, turn rice over occasionally and scrape bottom of caldero.

Remove spices. Spoon rice into a flat serving platter. Allow to cool at room temperature. This is served cold. (Serves 12)

Coquito Recipe will be in the next edition, look out for it! *Buen Provecho.*

For a more detailed instructions on how to make some delicious Puerto Rican cuisine check out. www.elboricua.com/recipes.html

Save Second Base

Breast Cancer among Latinas

Mujeres, did you know that breast cancer is most commonly diagnosed among Latina women and especially in their later stages? According to the National Cancer Institute, it is proven that breast cancer presents itself differently in Latina women. There are many factors that are involved, obviously the main one being socioeconomic. We are not as easily accessible to health insurance as other women. Most mammograms for those who are uninsured typically cost \$80 - \$125 or more. Imagine a mammogram should be done once year, it is not affordable. Is there a bright side? Yes, there is hope for Latina women. Women Caring for Women/Mujeres Cuidando Mujeres (MCM) is a non-for profit program that provides information about breast cancer detection for low-income women. This program works side by side with "Every Woman Counts," helping those who cannot afford the mammogram, those programs are in California. Do not worry; programs like those do not only exist in the west coast, but also in Chicago, Illinois. In the information below are some locations where free or low cost mammograms are held.

Please call or visit. *Access Community Health Network: REACH 2010 Program*
1501 South California Ave.
Chicago, IL. 60608

Call toll-free: 1-866-882-2237 and mention "REACH 2010"

Free mammogram referral for women over 40.

Chicago Department of Public Health Clinics
Locations:

Englewood

641 W. 63rd St.
(312)747-7831

Lower West Side

1713 S. Ashland
(312)746-5157

Uptown

845 W. Wilson
(312)744-1938

West Town

2418 W. Division
(312)744-0943

Roseland

200 E. 115th St.
(312)747-9500

Illinois Department of Public Health's Office of Women's Health - Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program:

Regular breast and cervical cancer screenings increase the chances of early detection and successful cancer treatment. If you meet eligibility requirements, you can receive a free mammogram, Pap smear, and breast exam. If you are diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer while enrolled in the program, you may receive treatment benefits through a special program from the **Illinois Department of Public Aid. Call the Women's Health Line at 1-888-522-1282** for more information.

Here are two important terms that women should know when understanding the

importance of breast cancer screening. These terms were provided by Womenshealth.gov

Mammogram: A safe, low-dose x-ray exam of the breasts to look for changes that are not normal. Starting at age 40, women should have screening mammograms every 1-2 years. Depending on factors such as family history

and your general health, your doctor may recommend a mammogram before age 40.

Clinical breast exam (CBE): The doctor looks at and feels the breasts and under the arms for lumps or anything else that seems unusual. Ask your doctor if you need a CBE.

by Jessie Fuentes

A Night at Poetry *at the Batey Urbano*

Poetry is a form of expression; a tool that I believe can defeat colonialism. Throughout the city, there are many places that have poetry nights, and open mic sessions. Batey Urbano is one of the very few spaces that is dominated by Puerto Ricans and Latinas/os when it comes to the mic. Friday, the January 29, Batey Urbano had one of the hottest poetry events of the beginning of 2010.

I am a current member of the collective of the Batey Urbano, so I saw how this event was shaped, which was amazing. Poets from Logan Square, Oak Park, Loyola University, Kumba Lynx, and of course Humboldt Park ripped every second of the mic. Batey is a space where Puerto Ricans and Latinas/os can get on the stage and tell their stories, stories that are never listened to and stories that are never even thought of as worthy.

I heard stories of death, drug addictions, gang violence, and unstable homes. Who would have thought that such ugly stories can sound so beautiful? At this poetry event, I saw poets come off of the stage with a sense of relief and not because they got their performance over with, but because they were able to share stories that more than many of the people in the crowd can relate to. That alone is already breaking the chains of oppression.

Over 200 hundred people filled the seats of the Batey Urbano that night, and 17 poets demolished the stage. I would like to thank the rest of the members the collective: Samuel Vega, Erica Vega, and José Rivera for making the event possible for poets and our guests to enjoy.

30 YEARS



OF THE CAPTURE OF THE PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS
AND THE INCARCERATION OF CARLOS ALBERTO TORRES

APRIL 3, 2010

6-9 PM

BATEY URBANO

2620 W. DIVISION ST.

National Boricua Human Rights Network-Chicago will be culminating its Prison Cell Project with reflections from former Puerto Rican Political Prisoners Alicia Rodríguez, Luis Rosa, and Ricardo Jiménez.

Original artwork by current Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Oscar López Rivera will be exhibited.

Que Ondee Sola magazine presents:

ARTE BORICUA:

PRESENTATION BY ARTIST RICHARD SANTIAGO

Puerto Rican artist, Richard "Tiago" Santiago, graduated Magna Cum Laude with his MFA from the Maryland Institute, College of Art. He has exhibited his work in Puerto Rico, Chicago, New York, Madrid, Miami, México, among other cities. He is currently working on a documentary, "En la esquina," on the history of professional boxing in Puerto Rico.

THURSDAY, APRIL 1 • 1:40-2:40PM
LWH -1002 (CLASSROOM BUILDING)

Sponsored by the Union for Puerto Rican Students and
the Office of University Outreach & Equal Opportunity
E-041 • (773) 442-4583 • queondeesola@gmail.com