



Rethinking College Recruitment and Retention

Creating an Organic Pipeline from High School to the University



Que Ondee Sola

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ROBERTO CLEMENTE HIGH SCHOOL

June 8, 2011 marked the ribbon-cutting of the long fought struggle of the new Angelina Pedroso Center For Diversity & Intercultural Affairs, which includes the Latina/o Cultural & Resource Center at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU). The ceremony took place in the B building near room 159 with over 50 people in attendance. President Sharon K. Hahs led with the opening remarks and shared some thoughts on the Angelina Pedroso Center. President of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Carlos Azcoitia also shared some reflections.

The final remarks were made by Board of Trustees member and alumni of both the Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS) and *Que Ondee Sola* (QOS), Marvin Garcia. Mr. García's comments stressed the importance of the new space, especially for someone who was a part of the Latina/o student struggle at NEIU in decades past. García challenged the crowd to not to forget the struggle that it took to have a Latina/o presence at NEIU and emphasized the role that students played throughout the years for the center to become, not only a physical reality, but a space that Latina/os could call there own. Thus, the ribbon-cutting

was not only a historical moment that took a great amount of commitment, energy and passion on part of the students but is just one step further in holding the university accountable to its commitment to the Latina/o community. Garcia also acknowledged the members of UPRS and QOS who were integral from start to finish in making a Latina/o Resource & Cultural Center possible.

As mentioned earlier, the center is a reminder of the ongoing struggle that must continue in producing a fruitful Latina/o status at NEIU that is intricately connected to what is happening on campus, our communities, and our homelands. For example, when touring through this edition of *Que Ondee Sola* you will read on the work that is taking place in the Humboldt Park community with building an educational pipeline between Roberto Clemente High School and NEIU. In essence, such a pipeline project is a primary model of which to address and improve Latina/o retention and move forward the idea of the Angelina Pedroso Center being a space that will develop the future leaders of our Latina/os communities.

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Que Ondee Sola

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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.

On April 6th, college students from Northeastern were able to take a group of students from Roberto Clemente High School alongside a small group of students from Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School for a full college day experience to Northeastern Illinois University, a university that is well known for its percentage of incoming Latina/o students. But sadly, more than half of those students don't graduate. In essence, the trip was an attempt gain momentum and to improve the Latina/o



Juan "Nito" Morales

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status at NEIU in terms of retention and the overall engagement of students within the NEIU community. With over 25 students that attended, they were able to meet other college students that share some of the same stories, sit-in classes with them, meet college professors, and tour the Northeastern campus/student programs. They were given presentations by those programs and by professors (who are involved with transforming educational environments). With that, I believe the following points must be re-examined.

- College Recruitment in "community base" high schools
- Engaging students where they challenge themselves
- Transforming educational environments to improve student status
- Rethink teaching
- Rethink how students learn and students role in transformation

Throughout my time at Clemente, I've noticed how students become interested in such discussions on previous points. Moreover, I've been able to build meaningful and healthy relationships with students and provide support for the many challenges they confront with becoming college students and with other needs. Within the past month, the number of students has greatly increased, which increases possibilities towards future community development. At the same time I was able to challenge students with thinking how community is key in terms of an on-going educational process. When looking at the Universities historical legacy of student involvement in the construction of student programs and organizations, we are able to see how important students become in improving communities and school in the context of social change and social justice.

Here is the list of students that will be

attending NEIU in the fall semester:

Cecilia Pérez, Ivan Rosa, David Torres, Angel Quiles, David Ott, Robert González, Marina Rivera, Hilda Morales, Anaizeth Hernández, Jesus Martínez, and Henry Fuentes.

Christina Pacione-Zayas, PhD

The Culture of Calm Initiative at Roberto Clemente Community Academy

The Culture of Calm (CoC) is a district-wide violence prevention initiative in Chicago Public High Schools to transform school climate and culture to be more safe, stable and supportive of student success. The initiative seeks to improve attendance, behavior and academics in schools that historically have struggled to meet district goals.

Introduced early in the 2009-2010 school year by former CEO of Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Ron Huberman, CoC was funded through federal stimulus dollars and began implementation in 2010-2011. Thirty-eight high schools were identified to receive CoC funding with six of those high schools designated as pilot schools for the initiative. Roberto Clemente Community Academy is one of the CoC pilot schools receiving more than \$1 million dollars along with additional resources such as a full-time CoC Coordinator, intensive mentoring for 100 students through the Mentoring and Advocacy Program (MAP) and Community Watchers on strategic blocks ensuring Safe



Passage to and from school.

As the CoC Coordinator, my technical role is that of a project manager to oversee the planning, implementation and evaluation of Clemente's unique CoC plan. However, when charged with transforming school climate and culture, it is impossible to not find yourself involved in nearly every aspect of school life. Additionally, our plan has more than 30 components that range from student development to behavior framework, staff development and parent/community engagement.

When stepping in the shoes of the CoC Coordinator a year ago, a position that did

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not previously exist, I knew the task would be a challenge given that when hired I was told that the position had a definitive end date one year later, the principal had just resigned and the whisper of school reconstitution became a loud roar. Although daunting for some, I was eager to work intensely with Clemente's staff, students and parents to show not only the district, but especially the naysayers, that given resources, creative license and dedicated staff positions, we can begin to shift climate and culture to be more restorative and supportive of our most precious assets (young people) to the future of our society.

I approached the position like a community organizer and dedicated significant time and energy to get to know the staff, their concerns, as well as their aspirations for Clemente. We spent the entire summer discussing, researching and finally creating an implementation plan to carry out Clemente's vision for the Culture of Calm. After seven weeks of meeting with eight staff committees comprising of 64 active members and conducting focus groups with over 100 students enrolled in Summer School, we rolled out the plan to the entire staff during a CoC training week two weeks prior to the first day of school.

The CoC training week oriented staff on newly adopted school expectations known as the Pathways to Success. Each pathway serves as an umbrella for a host of programs, resources and services to encourage attendance, on-time arrival, social emotional learning, positive behavior and attitudes and academic preparedness. Aside from the initial CoC training week, staff trained throughout the year in a comprehensive classroom management

program, anger management, restorative justice, community engagement, bystander intervention, peace circle keeping and positive behavior intervention and supports.

Other areas of focus for our CoC plan included contracting external partners to deliver targeted interventions as alternatives to suspension for students who were referred for social services and behavior issues. Through establishing a student services team that meets weekly to discuss and assign referrals, we were able to improve communication by ensuring each referral received the appropriate intervention, avoided duplication of services and ultimately prevented students' needs from falling through the cracks.

Most importantly CoC dedicated resources to parental engagement and community outreach through hosting several parent appreciation information nights outside of report card pick up. Additionally, we subcontracted a Parent Organizer to identify parent/guardian needs and organize resources and workshops to address the needs. Three Youth Organizers were hired from community-based organizations to develop youth leadership programs as well as connect students to post-secondary and community resources/programs. Lastly, home visits, mailings and advertisements in community news papers helped to communicate to the larger community school happenings.

We have been able to quantitatively and qualitatively demonstrate progress in the desired outcomes outlined by the district. In comparison to the 2009-2010 school year Clemente has increased overall student

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attendance by 4% (Source: Dashboard) . Currently Clemente is one percentage point above the rest of the 38 Culture of Calm Focus Schools in the area of attendance. We attribute this change to the work of the staff with creating daily, weekly and monthly incentives for on-time arrival and perfect attendance as well the work of student advocates who perform regular home visits.

Our progress can also be measured in the reduction of serious disciplinary infractions. Since implementing the use of electronic storage lockers for cell phones and other electronic devices and abolishing the uniform/dresscode, we experienced a dramatic shift resulting in a 40% reduction in the number of high level misconducts (Source: Verify). Essentially, through CoC Clemente has been equipped to address conflict and challenges proactively through assigning appropriate interventions with these necessary resources.

Most importantly, we were able to make significant progress with reducing out of school suspensions with the students labeled most at risk. In total, Clemente has witnessed a 27% reduction in out of school suspensions with the aforementioned population (Source: IMPACT). We give credit to this decrease by having viable alternatives to suspension in place such as peer jury and a structured in-school suspension program rebranded as the "Successful Solution Center" (SSC). While in the SSC, students participate in an intensive social emotional workshop covering various themes such as: poetry/spoken word, art therapy, motivational interviewing, restorative justice and anger management. Ultimately, assigning a student to SSC

preserves their attendance, exposes them better decision making, and keeps them out of harm's way because they are not on the streets.

Needless to say the school year has been quite busy. One year alone cannot ensure sustainable results because we are still tweaking and learning. In fact, research shows that it takes eight years to recognize substantive change in school climate and culture (Comer, 2004). However, one essential lesson I learned this year is affirming the fact that relationships are the precursor to learning. If educators do not have a relationship with students or even each other, very little learning or progress can take place. In order to transform school culture and climate, individuals have to commit to change in a way that might be counter-intuitive to traditional authoritarian training many adopt when preparing to work in a school.

Essentially, we have signed up to be advocates for young people and to make decisions based on students, not adults or personal agendas. We must come to expect the challenges of adolescence and help to guide and usher young people into adulthood so they can become better versions of themselves and equip them with the skills to meet their fullest potential. In closing, I would like to share one of my favorite pieces of advice that has helped me get through the year: "At work, expect the unexpected. We get paid to solve problems, not to put our feet up."

I am an Immigrant

Dedicated to everyone who has found him or herself in a new place and unwelcome

I am an immigrant
I was not born in this land
I do not speak the language of its people
I do not pray to their God

I am an immigrant
I do not wear the clothes that they wear
I do not listen to the music that they listen to
I do not eat the food that they eat

I am an immigrant
I came to work the land, but they don't want me to
I came to build, but they don't want me to
I came to help, but they don't want me to

I am an immigrant
I fight to live, but they seek to kill me
I fight for them, but they fight against me
I fight for holy peace, but they fight for holy war

I am an immigrant
So why am I here

The Commonwealth

I did not ask to be a part of you,
But I thought you would be better than her.
When others would threaten and attack you,

I was at your side, a faithful soldier.

All I ever wanted was my freedom.
I desired your success for myself,
Yet, I am bonded to you in serfdom.
As I adore you I condemn myself.

You began to call me your commonwealth,
But our wealth has little in common.
Your bombs hurt me and effected my health,
Jaded for so long, strength I must summon.

Treat me as your own or let me be free.
What I am now can't continue to be.

A Journey For Freedom

A Walk to free Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Oscar López Rivera

On May 19th Michael Reyes and I set out on a journey, a journey that we knew would raise awareness to a cause that currently does not receive the attention that it deserves. Our goal was to walk 200 miles from Terre Haute, Indiana to Chicago, Illinois and bring attention to the injustice of Oscar López Rivera's 30 years of imprisonment for his belief of Puerto Rican independence. We knew that 200 miles was a lot but in the back of my mind I did not think it would be too difficult. Though we soon found out that walking 20 miles a day with a foot full of blisters, hurt and made the 2011 Freedom Walk difficult. However, soon enough we began to put all of our pain and struggles into the perspective of Oscar's struggles throughout his prison sentence.

That the walk was as much of a physical task as it was a mental obstacle. We tried to focus on our pain and mental exhaustion to replicate that of Oscar's pain as he spent 12 years in complete isolation and sensory deprivation. Throughout the long days of the walk, Michael and I had lots of time to converse, as we did, but we also had time to reflect and think about what we were doing. Finally, after 10 days of walking 200 miles and being greeted by crowds of people cheering and congratulating us, realized that we could not have done the Freedom Walk without the support we had from people not just

throughout the nation and throughout the world. It is this support that drives Oscar López Rivera to stay strong in the fight for his release and for the independence of Puerto Rico. Now nearly two weeks after



the Freedom Walk we continue our fight and continue to gain support from new members that will lead to justice.

A New Puerto Rico

From Bandera to Bandera we are our own island.
Creating movements around the world, the government couldn't
stop them.

We create institutions and rebuild blocks.
Give youth a second chance to think!! Lots!!
From Hip Hop to community Organizing we are Boricua Within.
Off the island but in the Chicago Winds.

In the heart of Humboldt Park we call it Paseo Boricua.
Where families raise their flags, and women proud to be Latina.

You see we have created a home away from home.
Self-determination! Envisioning our future on our own.
New York!!! Chicago!!! We have built the Nation State
Communities in this country that resemble the island place.
We have never been terrorists nor will we be residents of
poverty.

I will be a leader for my people and there no one and nothing
stopping me.

People say your not Puerto Rican if not from the island. That's
irrelevant to me.

As far as I'm concerned Boricuas off the island fight for their
identity.

With self expression we dance to Bomba.
Writing poetry over the beat of Congas.
With alternative places we tell stories in the Batey.
With a sense of our identity we give hope for a brand new day.

We break the cycles of oppression
Creating our own curriculum's and teaching new lessons.
We are a force to be reckoned with.

Proud of where we come from and who we are! There is no

regretting it!!

Imagine a place where you can be who you are.

Acquire knowledge! And raise the norm Bar.

We have invented this place.

Where our marginalized youth can feel safe, and claim space.

We are Puerto Rico
Creating homes where everyone is treated equal.

In between the flags of La Division
We are allowed to live by a new vision.

In the Path of Oscar López Rivera, Part II

Interview with the friends and family of the last Puerto Rican Political Prisoner



Lucy Rodríguez: Former political prisoner and friend of Oscar

Oscar, I think this was in 1970 maybe, one of the aspects of his work, of who he is, that really made a deep impression, is the fact that he started out as a community organizer. Oscar was a good student because he knew how to organize. He knew how to organize people in the community to defend themselves. For example, to defend against police brutality, to demand decent housing, not houses that were so deteriorated with roaches. I mean awful home surroundings and home conditions. That's very important for human beings, to have a place they call home, that is decent, that is clean, that is orderly, and at a decent price. I remember his efforts, which I also

supported and became a part of, the efforts for Latino studies, for the right of Latinos to go to college/university, to understand and know their history, because once we know our history, then we make better decisions for the present and the future. I think the fact that he was the community organizer that he is, because I'm sure that remains the same, makes him very much a part of communities, not just

Puerto Rican communities. It can be here, in Puerto Rico; it could be anywhere. It's the human struggle at the communal level to achieve dignity and happiness. It may not be perfect, but at least it's empowering that we can make changes to positively affect us, affect our lives. I think that that's what I want to share. Oscar and I were a couple. We lived together. We struggled together. We went clandestine together when the FBI identified us in 1976. We had to leave, leave everything behind, so I was impacted at a very personal and profound level. What I can say with all certainty, what I can attest to, is his profound humanity and keen intelligence to use his vision, his ability to see and understand the world in a way that

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affects people socially and at the level of community. I'm not surprised that he continues today to keep others, to keep the interests of others, before his own interests. Though, I think it's ok for Oscar to think about his own needs also. I think

food for the cats. What I want to say is that he's very sensitive and that just adds to his vision of the world. I think people can identify with him at all levels.

Lourdes Lugo, Oscar's niece & former principal of Dr. Albizu Campos High School



Not only Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora, but all Puerto Ricans have a responsibility in terms of one, he's been exemplary in not only the time he's been in prison, which is going to be 30 year, but the way he has served that time is probably totally against what the U.S expects a person to be like when they go to prison. He's never sold out. He's never left his discipline.

that's important, but I think we need him outside because there's a lot of work to do especially at the level of community. He's a leader. He's a leader that will not betray his people. In fact, he works on behalf of his people, on behalf of all people. He understands that it's not just human beings, but it's mother earth, and it's the animals. We used to take care of animals when we were clandestine. We used to put our own, sometimes our own lives at risk if it meant to go see a cat that had given birth. We didn't know if that cat had food, or if the babies had food, and maybe we shouldn't be around, but we would go. Then, not only would we go, but at that time I didn't drive a standard and the only car we had was a standard. So it was a Sunday afternoon when stores are closed "well find something please" and I stayed cleaning up and giving love to the animals while he found some food. He found some

He's creative. He was able to develop a whole artistic self by his own means, so this whole thing that I need training and I need to do this and I need to do that in order for me to be fulfilled goes out the window when you see the kinds of accomplishments both personal, political, and that whole sense of being full that Oscar has been able to develop while probably in a situation, and I keep thinking of when he was in Marian, which he had nothing. You know there was nothing but 23 and a half hours of being locked in a cell and it is there where he starts to develop his art. It is there that he has that discipline of asking us not to go see him while he adjusts to a new lifestyle of dealing with being alone without human contact in prison, so we have a lot to learn and he's been just in every aspect that anyone can think of, Oscar. He can contribute to somebody's life by his example.

I think if I would be more like Oscar probably would be a better person. I think that being his niece, he's a very hard ruler to measure your self by. I feel very small next to him in terms of his commitment, his clarity, his way of dealing with adversity. I wish I could be a lot more like him, but

I'm not. I'm not even close to it. I think that when I have been in the hardest times I always think of him and realize that I still have choice of making things different or better, whether it's for myself, for my family, my community or the people that are around me.

Margaret Ramírez/ Chicago Tribune

Puerto Rican activists ask Obama to release last of the FALN prisoners

Dozens of Puerto Rican community members and human rights activists gathered Sunday to call for the release of Puerto Rican nationalist Oscar Lopez Rivera after 30 years in prison. Lopez Rivera, now 68, is a gray-haired vestige of a long-gone era in America, when a group known as the FALN (the Spanish abbreviation for the Armed Forces of National Liberation) fought for Puerto Rico's independence from the U.S. More than a dozen FALN members were convicted and imprisoned in the 1980s on various charges, including seditious conspiracy and armed robbery. In 1999, President Bill Clinton granted clemency to nearly all the prisoners and they were released.

Lopez Rivera, who is serving a 70-year sentence in a federal prison in Terre Haute, Ind., is the last remaining Puerto Rican prisoner.

In recent months, the National Boricua Human Rights Network and other activists have launched a national campaign to urge President Barack Obama to commute his sentence. In addition to a prayer vigil and rally in Chicago, events were also

held in New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Puerto Rico.

At the Sunday prayer service held at Lincoln United Methodist Church in Chicago, the prisoner's sister, Zenaida Lopez, said her brother has done his time and should be allowed to come home.

In addition to his sister, Lopez Rivera has a daughter, Clarissa, who lives in Puerto Rico and a granddaughter, Karina, who is a student at the University of Chicago.

"There's one thing that's forgotten in this struggle - and it's that Oscar is human," Zenaida Lopez said. "He's a brother. He's a father. He's a grandfather. He's a son. He's loved deeply by his family.

"We have to struggle to see that he is released, so that he becomes part of the family once again. It is our dream. It is our hope. It is something that we talk about every single day.

Also at the prayer service, two activists, Michael Reyes and Matt McCanna arrived after completing a 10-day, 200-mile walk

from the federal prison in Indiana to Chicago.

The FALN was involved in a series of bombings in New York and Chicago, including the 1975 bombing of the Fraunces Tavern in Manhattan that killed four and injured more than 60 others.

Lopez was not convicted for a role in the Tavern incident.

In the Puerto Rican community, Lopez Rivera, a Vietnam War veteran and community organizer, is widely regarded as hero. But, others view him as an unrepentant terrorist.

Those opponents said his release would send the wrong message about terrorism.

In February, the U.S. Parole Commission denied Lopez Rivera parole and released a statement that said: "We have to look at whether release would depreciate the seriousness of the offenses or promote disrespect for the law, whether release would jeopardize public safety and the specific characteristics of the offender."

Even so, his attorney Jan Susler, remains hopeful for his release. She noted that three previous U.S. presidents have commuted sentences of Puerto Rican prisoners.

Juan "Nito" Morales

Puerto Rican Activism and Pro-Independence Struggles of the Diaspora

The Statue of Liberty, to many people across the world, is supposed to be a symbol of freedom and liberty, a beacon of hope and opportunity for those who reach the shores of the United States. On October 25, 1977, however, the Statue surprisingly became embroiled in a dramatic and controversial incident which served to highlight one of the most ignored and overlooked issues in both US domestic and international political circles: colonialism and the case of Puerto Rico.

On that date a group of Puerto Rican activists came together in direct action to express their indignation over the continued incarceration of the five Nationalist freedom fighters that had been serving close to 25 years in prison for actions supporting

the independence of Puerto Rico. They occupied the statue for a full day, as gunships and snipers in helicopters circled overhead. In the meantime New York and New Jersey, fearing the clandestine Puerto Rican independence group Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN) was responsible and was poised to blow her up, battled for jurisdiction over the incident. The compañeros unfurled a Puerto Rican flag off the crown of the Statue and a banner at the statue's base which demanded the release of the Nationalists. President Jimmy Carter unconditionally released the Nationalists in 1979 after a strong international campaign pressured his administration for their release; they were welcomed home as heroes both in the States and in their native Puerto Rico.

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As we approach the 30th anniversary of this action, we reflect on the role that the Puerto Rican communities in the U.S. have played in the historical struggle for self-determination and independence for the archipelago.

Two veteran activists based in New York City share their points of view regarding the role of the Diaspora in the struggle for national liberation and share their thoughts regarding possible ways forward toward freedom. Miguel 'Mickey' Melendez, a former Young Lord, and Frank Velgara of Pro-Libertad, discuss the role of the Puerto Rican community in the U.S. and in particular in New York City within the struggle for national liberation. Far from offering a complete and diverse vision of the movement in New York, this report allows the compañeros to nonetheless impart insight and strategic visions for the future.

Melendez, whose 2003 book "We Took The Streets: Fighting For Latino Rights with The Young Lords", revealed that the Lords authorized him to organize an armed clandestine wing to the organization. He revealed that when the Puerto Rican communities are organized, then the role of the Diaspora in the movement has been to raise consciousness in the United States about the case of Puerto Rico. The Diaspora can raise the issues of the working class experience in Puerto Rico vis-à-vis the working class experience in the U.S. and within communities of color. When we are able to link the issues of workers and of the labor movement, Melendez feels that important connections are made. He mentions that many former activists are coming together to assess what can be done to move things forward. "The more

we go around the more we hear that young people are looking for an organizational form to make those connections and have these kinds of conversations. Right now, we don't have this here."

Velgara, who is also a former member of El Comité-MINP (Movimiento de Izquierda Nacional Puertorriqueño / National Movement of the Puerto Rican Left), shares that "the role of the Diaspora has been defined by the organizations on the island." He explains that this role is defined by the political perspective and the visions emanating from there, starting with the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party (PNPR). In the 1940's and 1950's, the PNPR looked to and saw the Diaspora in New York City as a source for resources and a backup for what they were doing on the island. Their main actions (1950 & 1954) came after long periods of organizing and other work with sympathizers, including printing jobs in peoples' basements and simply identifying supporters and sympathizers.

Later, during the 1960's, el Movimiento Pro Independencia (MPI) - Pro-Independence Movement - opened a beachhead in the Diaspora and even had some of its members move here. Velgara explains, "by 1972, when the organization became the Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño (PSP) (The Puerto Rican Socialist Party), it had people identified in the US who were supporters, who were organized, who shared similar visions. They realized the importance of creating a national network of chapters."

Although they reached out to the Communist Party USA, the Party attempted to assume control of the activists and of the issues involved. But with the fiery actions of the CAL (Comandos Armados de Liberación, Armed Commandos for Liberation of Puerto

Rico), guerillas gaining ground in the Latin America, the Vietnam War, the Cuban Revolution - and with all of those movements also calling for the freedom of Puerto Rico, the CPUSA could not control the Puerto Rican agenda. The PSP was eventually able to organize and count on over 30,000 members between Puerto Rico and the United States.

Melendez feels strongly that in those years, there was a lot of good work that was started, but that there was a lot of unfinished work, mostly due to COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program) government intervention. The Young Lords, Black Panthers, CP USA, and dozens of the other left organizations in the United States were also subject to the criminal violations of COINTELPRO as was our movement for national liberation.

"The biggest thing this government fears is black people being organized and then you had black people being armed and that's another layer of vigilance and threat. When organizing communities of

color moved into the working class, that's when they had to stop it - they understand the potential there." He explains that the government will go after people, organizations and their resources, and include deep level of infiltrations, to try to really isolate them.

For Melendez, who participated in the takeover of the Statue, there was a lot of trauma associated with the movement in New York City and how it was repressed. The cadre was involved in military battles with police; police would come into the community and peoples' home, shooting them. "Most people were directly or indirectly affected by this...it took people some time to figure out their footing after suffering that trauma, some people lost their footing and are lost forever, some others cut out a little sliver of political work for themselves and continued to work on that. It has taken a while but many of us are looking at all these situations and are coming back together to do this."

Alyssa Villegas

What is Puerto Rican Citizenship?

Being Puerto Rican is hard to define. Through a troubled history, our people do not fit into any of the categories held by fellow Latinos/as. The island is not a part of the Caribbean, Latin America, or Central America. Due to its commonwealth status, another identity crisis is developed. American born Puerto Ricans are not considered to be "truly" Puerto Rican by those living on the island. However, while inhabitants of Puerto Rico have Puerto

Rican citizenship, they are still U.S. citizens. It is important to understand the past and current state of Puerto Ricans and their citizenship.

The first country to settle on the island of Puerto Rican was Spain. During the Spanish regime, Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico were considered Spanish subjects. As a result of this, people were not granted full rights and privileges unlike the citizens of

Spain. Despite being granted autonomy by the Spanish, Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States in 1899 after the Spanish-American war, through the Treaty of Paris. Along with Puerto Rico, the United States gained control over Cuba, the Philippines, and Guam. Since Puerto Ricans were still considered Spanish subjects, they were not considered U.S. citizens. After May 1, 1900, Puerto Ricans became citizens of Puerto Rico for residency purposes only. Puerto Rican citizenship continues to hold no international bounds.

On May 2, 1917, the Jones Act granted the Puerto Rican people voluntary naturalized U.S. citizenship. This caused the classification of Puerto Rican citizenship to cease. It was not until 1927 that it was reestablished for residency purpose only. Through the same Act, children born of those who became U.S. citizens were considered U.S. citizens. They, however, could not run for the U.S. presidency because they were not "naturally born". The 1940 Nationality Act, which became effective January 13, 1941, stated that those born in Puerto Rico after that date were to be considered naturally born

U.S. citizens. Due to being born in a U.S. territory, citizens in Puerto Rico are not qualified to run for the U.S. presidency because they do not meet the constitutional requirement of residence within the U.S. For the exact reason, U.S. citizens legally domiciled in Puerto Rico cannot vote for the U.S. president, vice president and members of Congress. They may exercise their right, however, if they move back to establish legal residence in the mainland U.S. The same right applies to the natural born U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico if they decide to move and establish residence in any one of the states.

The influences of other countries have made it difficult to decide what being Puerto Rican means. Wherever we happen to live, we are seen as a U.S. citizen through official eyes. It is true that having an international standing with Puerto Rican citizenship would be amazing and fair, it isn't necessary to divine a Puerto Rican. Regardless of any title given to us, we thrive. Whether we are in the U.S. or on the island, our culture and pride seeps through our pores. No country, no title, and no person will ever be able to change that.

Jasmin Enberg/ All Media NY

Obama's Visit to Puerto Rico

]As Barack Obama made the first presidential visit to Puerto Rico since 1961, anti-colonial protesters gathered to demand independence and the release of Puerto Rican nationalists imprisoned in the US.

According to the Associated Press, a group of 20 demonstrators held a vigil last night at

the San Cristobal Fort on the outskirts of the island's capital, San Juan. They called for the release of three Puerto Rican prisoners being held for their pro-independence political beliefs.

Others took to the streets and climbed up telephone poles to display messages

calling for Independence and the release of political prisoners, TeleSUR reported.

Puerto Rico has been a US territory since 1898 when the island was invaded and taken from Spain, and its status has been met with harsh criticism from a small group of Puerto Ricans since then. Nevertheless, a majority of Puerto Ricans has consistently voted in favor of the island's strong connection to the US.

And, according to The New York Times, Obama had a warm welcome from about 1,000 Puerto Rican politicians and residents when he landed on the island just before noon on Tuesday.

Although reports of arrests during the demonstrations have conflicted, Prensa Latina reported that one activist was arrested for demanding that the US government free a political prisoner, Oscar

Lopez Rivera, who has been held for 30 years in jail.

Local police also told the newspaper that five others were arrested for hanging pro-independence signs on the island, but The Associated Press reported on Tuesday morning that there had been no arrests made in conjunction with the protests.

The purpose of Obama's visit to the island is to garner the support of Hispanic voters and to show Puerto Ricans that the US has not forgotten about the island.

Obama plans to meet with the governor and the Democratic party in an effort to raise money for his campaign.

John F. Kennedy was the last president to visit Puerto Rico 50 years ago.

Berta Joubert-Ceci, World Weekl

U.S. Pushes Repression in Latin America

While mass demonstrations and uprisings are challenging puppet regimes that carry out imperialism's neoliberal, privatizing and anti-people policies, the leading imperialist power, the United States, is on a witch-hunting rampage. It is aided by ultra-right forces at home and abroad and by its surrogates in friendly states. They use the "terrorist" label to arrest, prosecute and even execute those they feel are a threat to imperialism – that is, to monopoly capitalism in its final stage.

Two recent examples in the Caribbean and

Latin America illustrate this, one in Puerto Rico and another regarding Venezuela and Colombia.

Criminalization of P.R. independence movement.

During a 20-minute hearing on May 10 in a Hartford, Conn., federal court, Norberto González Claudio pleaded not guilty to charges related to the theft of \$7.2 million in 1983 from a Wells Fargo truck by the Boricua Popular Army-Macheteros, a socialist, pro-independence clandestine

group.

Ten days earlier, agents of the FBI and the Puerto Rico Bureau of Special Investigations had arrested him in a town in the center of the island. After more than two decades in which he lived clandestinely for the "crime" of fighting for the liberation of his homeland, the question is why he was arrested now. Is there a concerted effort to retaliate against anti-capitalist and pro-socialist liberation movements?

His brother, Avelino González Claudio, has been in a U.S. prison for the same charges since 2008. On May 9 he was suddenly classified as a "domestic terrorist" and separated from the general prison population. While in isolation, he is more vulnerable to becoming a victim of torture. For more than a year he has been denied medicine for Parkinson's disease, causing permanent neurological damage.

On May 10 another Puerto Rican political prisoner in U.S. dungeons, Oscar López Rivera, was denied parole on the grounds that his release would "promote disrespect for the law." He has been behind bars for almost 30 years. (prolibertadweb.tripod.com)

Many pro-independence figures on the island are under constant police and FBI surveillance. They remember too well the vicious and cruel assassination of Macheteros leader Filiberto Ojeda Ríos in 2005, who, after being shot, bled to death while hundreds of FBI agents stood by, denying him emergency medical care.

This was meant as a warning to the progressive forces in the island-colony,

where the political situation is at the boiling point. The pro-statehood, Tea Party-affiliated Gov. Luis Fortuño has sped up neoliberalism by imposing privatizing laws that benefit the criollo bourgeoisie and U.S. transnational corporations. An example is his effort to privatize the prestigious public University of Puerto Rico, which has awakened a glorious student movement.

Fortuño has increased the repressive force of the state as an appendage of the U.S. by nominating the second in command of the FBI office there to head the Puerto Rican police.

Venezuela & Colombia

In South America, U.S.-imposed efforts to criminalize struggle and silence the opposition have taken on another form.

On the same day that U.S. authorities were busy criminalizing Puerto Rican pro-independence fighters, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, an imperialist think tank, launched its latest document for aggression, this time against Venezuela and Ecuador. The IISS, it should be remembered, masterminded the lie about "weapons of mass destruction" that served as the basis for the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Nigel Inkster, IISS director of Transnational Threats and Political Risk, released a book called "The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of 'Raúl Reyes.'" Inkster had also been involved in the WMD deception.

The book accuses both the Venezuelan and Ecuadorean governments of close

collaboration with the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which the U.S. government lists as a terrorist organization.

However, the book has already been discredited – by no less than the Colombian Supreme Court.

The IISS report is based primarily on Interpol's supposed findings regarding the computer files of FARC leader Raúl Reyes. It claims that his computer and pen drives were miraculously saved intact after the Colombian military bombed a FARC encampment in Ecuador near the border with Colombia on March 1, 2008. The bombing killed Reyes and 22 other people, including Mexican students visiting the camp. The report is clearly meant to up the aggression against Venezuela and its efforts to develop sovereignty and regional unity with independence from imperialism.

It is ironic that the Venezuelan government a few weeks before the IISS report handed over revolutionary journalist Joaquin Becerra to the criminal Colombian government of Juan Manuel Santos, supposedly because Becerra was on Interpol's list of people linked to FARC. Becerra, a survivor of the progressive electoral bloc Patriotic Union, which was massacred by death squads in the 1980s after winning many local offices throughout Colombia, had to take refuge in Sweden more than 10 years ago. He became a Swedish citizen and started an alternative online journal, ANNCOL, which reported about the reality in Colombia.

For that, ANNCOL has been a target of former President Alvaro Uribe and now of the Santos administration, which wants to whitewash Colombia's image in order to sign a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.

Che Guevara's statement of "al imperialismo, ni un tantito así" (no concession to imperialism, even the smallest one) has proven correct once again. Imperialism forced the hand of the Venezuelan government, through U.S.-ally Santos, only to turn around and accuse it of aiding terrorists anyway.

Now Becerra is in danger, along with thousands of other political prisoners in Colombia, the country he was forced to leave after his first wife was killed there.

On May 19 the whole basis for accusing Becerra was demolished. The Colombian Supreme Court ruled that the so-called evidence from the Reyes computer was not valid and was in fact illegal, since, among other considerations, the alleged computer equipment was taken without the authorization or participation of the Ecuadorean government.

The court also pointed out that the files used to accuse the Venezuelan and Ecuadorean governments, Becerra, many other activists and even progressive Colombian Sen. Piedad Córdoba were in Word format, not emails, so it could not be proven that they were sent or received.

30 años

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