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## Que Ondee Sola - April 2000

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# Que Ondee Sola

April 2000



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# Editorial

April is arguably one of the most historic months in Puerto Rican history. *Que Ondee Sola* wishes in this issue to commemorate those who have struggled and sacrificed on behalf of the Puerto Rican nation and its people.

On April 8, 1827, Don Ramon Emeterio Betances was born in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. He is regarded as the father of the Puerto Rican nation. He dedicated his life to the independence of Puerto Rico from Spain and the to abolition of slavery.

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1980 eleven Puerto Ricans were arrested for activities in support of Puerto Rican independence. In the years after, more would be arrested and subsequently incarcerated, becoming Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war. Five are still being held behind U.S. federal penitentiary walls.

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1999 David Sanes Rodríguez was killed by two 500lb bombs dropped by two F14's accidentally in Vieques, Puerto Rico. His death has united Puerto Rico in denouncing the U.S. military presence on that island, la isla nena. ¡Fuera La Marina!

On April 21, 1965 Don Pedro Albizu Campos, father of the modern Puerto Rican independence movement, died of a stroke less than a year after being released from prison. During his prison sentence Albizu was subject to radiation experiments which many suspect lead to his death.

In the first three issues of this Spring 2000 semester we paid tribute to the three bloodlines that form the Puerto Rican people. We looked at these influences through the lenses of history, art, and musical expressions. In this issue join us in commemorating a proud history of struggle and sacrifice.

*Que Ondee Sola* and the Union for Puerto Rican Students would like to bid farewell to Dr. Maximino Torres. Dr. Torres will be retiring at the end of this semester after over 27 years of service in Proyecto Pa'lante. His presence will surely be missed by all of the students he has impacted throughout the years.

Next month in our May issue we hope to have a special section in which Dr. Maximino Torres shares his insight and perspective with NEIU's student body.

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# Two Struggles

## One Nation

By Puerto Rican Political Prisoner

Oscar López-Rivera

The following article was written specially for *Que Ondee Sola* by Puerto Rican political prisoner, Oscar López-Rivera. He has been imprisoned for over 19 years for seditious conspiracy, related charges, and work for Puerto Rican Independence. He was sentenced to 55 years in prison, though the real crime is colonialism. *Que Ondee Sola* wishes to thank him not only for this article but more so for his sacrifice, strength, and dedication to freedom.

It is our great honor to be able to share his words with NEIU's campus community about the two unifying issues of the Puerto Rican nation.

Two issues that have recently come to capture the hearts and minds of the Puerto Rican people appeared of little rel-

*In commemoration of the*

*anniversary of the capture.*

**20<sup>th</sup>**  
**April 4, 1980**  
**¡Libertad! ¡Libertad!**

Free all Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War!

as soon as they had been captured, the U.S. government and the media orchestrated a campaign stigmatizing, denigrating and criminalizing the eleven and anyone who identified with and supported them.

The eleven had done the unthinkable and the unpredictable.

They had not only become part of the clandestine movement fighting for Puerto Rico's independence from within the Diaspora but they had also charged and accused the U.S. government with the crime of colonialism, rejecting the criminal colonial jurisdiction of the U.S. government over Puerto Rico and over them. To emphasize the latter point, Elizam Escobar told the court the following, "We have the right to define ourselves

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evance and urgency to them only two decades ago. When eleven Puerto Ricans were captured in Evanston IL on April 4, 1980, and dared to define themselves as freedom fighters and prisoners of war, their cause received very little support and their plight seemed destined for oblivion. Very few Puerto Ricans, even those who were part of the independence movement, were willing to risk supporting the captured freedom fighters. This was because



## Que Ondee Sola

only at a tribunal which is international in a fair hearing of our case, of our struggle for justice, of our struggle against every oppression of our country, of our people."

The eleven, by defining themselves as freedom fighters and prisoners of war, and by refusing to recognize the jurisdiction of the U.S. government over Puerto Rico and over themselves were reinforcing Don Pedro Albizu Campos' challenge to the legality of the Treaty of Paris of 1898. According to Albizu, the U.S. government had no place or jurisdiction in Puerto Rico, because Spain couldn't turn over and the U.S. government couldn't demand the lives of 900,000 Puerto Ricans, who had rejected being objects of war booty. Also, the eleven were asking for the rights conferred upon them by the resolutions and protocols of the United Nations that defined

colonialism as a crime against humanity and recognized the right of colonized people to fight for their freedom by all means at their disposal, including the use of force and arms.

For many years after their imprisonment, the eleven continued to receive support only from a small sector of the Puerto Rican independence movement and from family members. During all this time, the U.S. government continued its relentless campaign of persecution and criminalization against them and their supporters. But by the summer of 1999, their plight and the plight of other Puerto Rican political prisoners had changed. This was because the vast majority of the Puerto Rican people had openly come out in support of their incarceration, and were asking President Clinton to use his Presidential pardon prerogative and grant unconditional release to all Puerto Rican Political Prisoners.

And on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, eleven of the fifteen Puerto Rican political prisoners were released. Only Carlos Alberto Torres and Haydee Beltrán,

of the original eleven, remain in prison today.

On the day of the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners, the eleven were vindicated because by using his clemency power to release them, the president was acknowledging that their case was a political one, that Puerto Rico was a colony and that they received excessive sentences. In other words, they didn't receive a fair and impartial trial because they were Puerto Rican freedom fighters.

The other issue that has become a force uniting the Puerto Rican people is the struggle for the right of the people of Vieques to live in peace and not to be victimized anymore by the U.S. Navy. Twenty years ago, this issue was only counting with the support of a small number of people. The U.S. government, with the help of Carlos Romero Barcelo and the colonial administration, had successfully delivered a major setback to the people of Vieques and their supporters, who were trying to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques. With the assassination of Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal and the incarceration of mostly all the leaders of that struggle, the U.S. government had clearly shown the willingness to go in order to keep the Navy in Vieques.

In spite of the repression some of the most dedicated people forged ahead with the struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of



Taken from Primera Hora



Vieques. They were carrying on an uphill battle that enjoyed very little support. But after April 19, 1999 (the day when a bomb was dropped by the U.S. Navy killed David Sanes Rodríguez) everything changed.

Since then the struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques has galvanized the conscience of the Puerto Rican people and has become the main force that unites them over their ideological and religious differences. The people have made history not only for the prolonged acts of civil disobedience organized by those occupying the areas that the Navy claimed as its own, but also by the celebrating the biggest March (calling for peace for Vieques) in Puerto Rico's history.

Reluctantly, the U.S. government has had to address the issue of getting its Navy out of Vieques. Its solution? Attempt to bribe the people of Vieques with \$40 million and keep the Navy there for 3 more years. The answer of the vast majority of the Puerto Rican people has been to let the U.S. government know that they can't be bribed, because the human rights of people of Vieques can't be bought. They want the Navy out, the environment clean and the people of Vieques to be paid reparations and left alone to live in peace.

The U.S. government is proposing a partial solution like it did with the issue of the incarceration of the political prisoners. This partial solution only pro-

longs the pain and suffering of Puerto Rican people. Why doesn't the Government want to resolve these two issues? The answer is a simple one. The U.S. government and its lackeys (like Carlos Romero Barcelo and Pedro Rosello) want Puerto Rico to continue being a colony of the USA, and to deny Puerto Ricans their right to self-determination and independence. This reality only means that the struggle for justice, freedom and participatory democracy in Puerto Rico continues.



## Albizu y el Desfile

por Jacinto Ortega

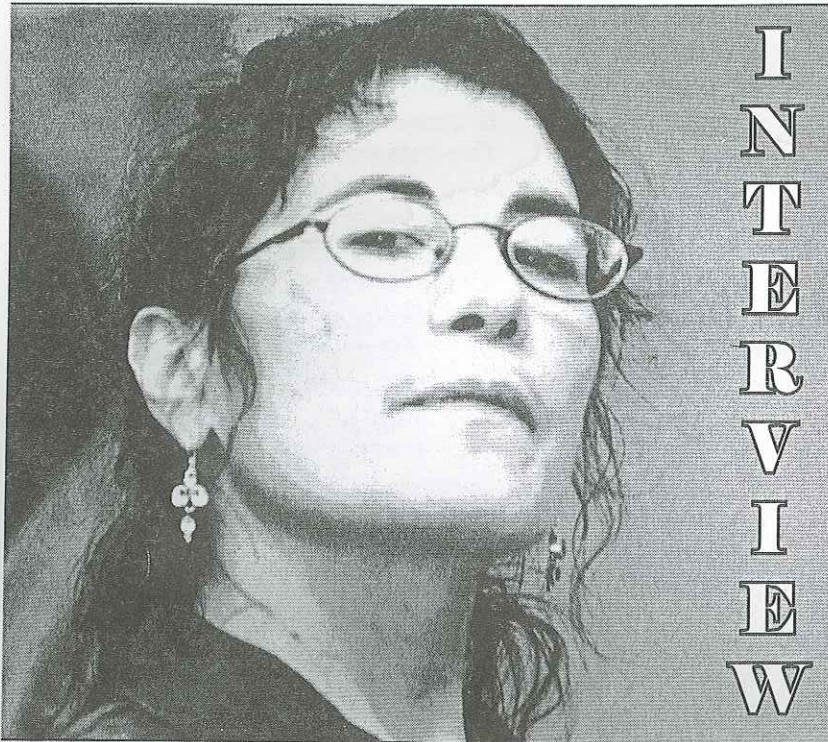
Quiero unirme al foro de discusión acerca de la dedicatoria del desfile puertorriqueño en Nueva York a Don Pedro Albizu Campos. Soy un puertorriqueño residente en Chicago que no recibe ni un centavo de los tan susodichos "beneficios federales"; por el contrario, pago contribuciones hasta por respirar como se hace en todo estado de la Unión. Luego de anunciarse la dedicatoria del desfile, la facción más recalcitrante de la derecha

asimilista en Puerto Rico se atrevió a llamar a un boicot de la actividad y se han dedicado a lanzar todo tipo de acusaciones contra el prócer Albizu. Todos los que glorifican tanto a los Estados Unidos y se empeñan en menospreciar nuestros valores y nacionalidad, se olvidan que Puerto Rico era una nación mucho antes que los Estados Unidos lo fuera (y se podría argumentar que todavía no lo es). El imperio militar y económico que representa la

Marina de Guerra de los Estados Unidos entró a nuestras playas a bombazos y cañonazos y no precisamente ofreciendo ayudas federales. Lo primero que hicieron los representantes del gobierno de Estados Unidos en Puerto Rico fue implementar la eliminación sistemática de todas las instituciones que representaban nuestra identidad y nacionalidad, incluyendo nuestro limitado gobierno

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*"I think we should work to become critical thinkers and not accept life undigested."*

**With former Puerto Rican political prisoner, Ida Luz Rodríguez**

**Conducted by Rubén Gerena**

*During the month of March two of the former Puerto Rican political prisoners visited Chicago. Sisters, Ida Luz and Alicia Rodríguez had not been to Chicago in almost 20 years. Reason being that they had been incarcerated for seditious conspiracy and related charges for 19 years.*

*Fortunately during their stay many of the members of Que Ondee Sola and the Union for Puerto Rican students were able to meet and speak with these incredible women. They were kind enough to give QOS staff member Rubén Gerena the time to interview them. Unfortunately, Alicia Rodríguez was ill and was unable be interviewed. It our great pleasure to present this dialogue to NEIU with the hopes that it will provide you*

*with a glimpse of these extraordinary Puerto Rican women.*

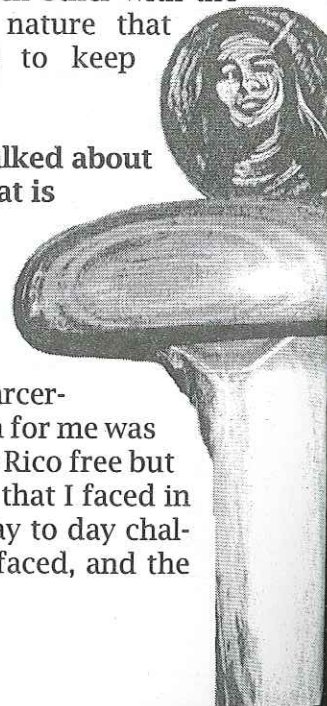
**Q.O.S:** You and the other Puerto Rican political prisoners were incarcerated for over nineteen years. How were you able to maintain yourself in prison for so long?

**Ida Luz:** I remember in 1980 when we were in the Cook County jail, I felt truly inspired to not allow my will to be broken by the conditions, that we not only faced in 1980, but that I knew we would face for a long time. I remember talking to my sister [Alicia Rodríguez] in the Cook County jail. The conditions were terrible and we looked at each other and said, we will be like the

steel that forges in fire. I remember that and it was a conscious decision on our part to be that steel. It was also our consciousness of the need to be free and the connection that we had to each other with the world, with nature that inspired me to keep going.

**Q.O.S:** You talked about freedom, what is freedom to you?

**Ida Luz:** When we were first incarcerated, freedom for me was seeing Puerto Rico free but the adversity that I faced in prison, the day to day challenges that I faced, and the







fact that everything was taken from me except my spirit and my will taught me how important the person is, my spirit was, and how important I was. So I then needed to assume a responsibility to also change as I wanted the world to change, If I wanted the world to change I had to change along side it. It wasn't just about Puerto Rico being free but what about me. So I developed an understanding of a need to fuse my own freedom with the freedom of a country, or the freedom of a community. It's both you can't fight for external freedom if you don't fight and work to become internally free as well. For example for twenty years in prison I did and I continue to do Yoga. It isn't a passive form of exercise. It is one in which I struggle to gain inspiration in my own life and in my own experience, so that I could continue to then be inspired by outside forces and to be a functional and effective human being. I see the two, I see me and I see the world we are both

Photos by Gene Lieber

in the process of change.

**Q.O.S:** Do you think that your feelings of Puerto Rican independence have changed in any way because you came to a point in your life where you saw that the spiritual human being becomes more important at times?

**Ida Luz:** No, I believe that it has made my understanding of human liberation deeper. It just makes it more important for me in my life. Liberation should be a goal- it isn't something that I see as out there. I see it as something that I also need to participate in as a human being and how those that work with my own family, my own community, and within the world we live in. In other words it's not abstract. It's not just objective but what is the subjective- the personal, the interior part of freedom, both have to go hand and hand. One can't say, I want Puerto Rico free without assuming your own responsibility to liberate yourself from a lot of the attitudes and mental chains that keep us tied to a vision of the world that doesn't lead to freedom.

**Q.O.S:** Is there anything that you could tell, specifically to Puerto Ricans, who don't understand what has occurred and what is occurring to Puerto Ricans today?

**Ida Luz:** Pivoting from my own experience, an experience that was extremely difficult for two decades. I think we should work to become critical thinkers and not accept life undigested. I think we should try to understand that no matter how hard things are, that adversity could be our friend because it builds. Going back to what I was saying with my sister and I, we knew we were going to have a very hard time with it. We were targets and we were going to continue to be targets of a counter insurgency strategy, so we took that and



made it work for us in prison. We didn't come out sick. We didn't come out disheartened, in fact we came out very much inspired by our experience and by the work and support that we received throughout the years. Take life and go with it, see what's going on in your family, in your community, and in your own heart. Have the will and the courage to always make it better because it can happen but it won't happen if we don't work it. We must

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make that commitment.

**Q.O.S:** What would say to those that worked to capture you, and all who were involved in your incarceration?

**Ida Luz:** That I did not lose myself in them or in their strategy against me. I found myself. I focused on what I wanted in my life and what I believe enhances a process of liberation. I have



become a better and stronger person as a result, I am that steel that forged. Had I gotten lost in their attempt against me then I don't think I would have survived. My mind and heart became clearer in what I wanted for myself and for others.

**Q.O.S:** What is your philosophy of life?

**Ida Luz:** My philosophy of life is, that every thing is connected that we need to be more conscious of that connection. We are part of a totality that life is sacred and that nature is sacred.

Also that community is essential to build a better life. We need to learn to think critically about who we are, what is our intention and how can we better serve ourselves and the world in which we live. My philosophy is that I want to be liberated, I want to become a human being that is liberated. Because only in that way can I be of service, that is my philosophy!

**Q.O.S:** I think that it has been essential in my own life, to understand my connection with the creator. I think that each day I come to a point where I either come closer or farther to the creator. Have you ever been in a position of either moving closer or farther away from the creator?

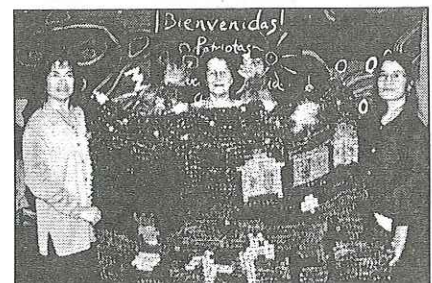
**Ida Luz:** I think that nature is one of the ways that I feel closer to the life force. I call it what moves the universe. I think that nature has always been an inspiration for me. Nature has been a way of my connecting with my spirit.

**Q.O.S:** You and your sister Alicia Rodríguez will be leaving soon and I just want to say on behalf of all my peers, because I can't speak for the elders, thank you.



It is because of you, and all of our Boricua leaders, that today I know who I am as a Puerto Rican. Each of you has helped me realize that it is who I want to be, that makes me who I am. I don't ever think that the people who feel the way I do will ever forget you and the other patriots. Thank you.

**Ida Luz:** Ruben, I say you're quite welcome and also that it is listening to you that makes me aware that it was not in vain, that the sacrifices that we endured have been a seed that we are seeing. You are the fruit of seeds which we helped plant, because we are part of a long historical process and as I began telling you it has been an honor.



QOS wishes to thank Ida Luz and Alicia Rodríguez for sharing with us so much!



April/Abril 2000

# Integrity Wins over Special Interests in 4th State Legislative District

By Enrique Salgado, Jr.

On March 21, 2000 by 9:30 PM it was almost certain that history had been made. All over the country people came out to take part in this years primary elections. Normally primaries are not that important, but in two races within the Latino community they were very important.

One was the race between Sonia Silva and Susana Mendoza on Chicago's southside Pilsen/Little Village area, in which Susana Mendoza won by a very slim margin. This campaign was filled with tremendous allegations and accusations from both parties. Susana Mendoza, who is and has been part of the Daley Machine won due to this type of politics.

The other race in the city's Latino community and which was far more important to the residents in that community was in Humboldt Parks Forth State Legislative District between Edgar López and Cynthia Soto. Edgar López, [the incumbent] who was backed by the Daley Machine, and Governor Ryan was defeated by Cynthia Soto, who was backed by Congressman Luis Gutiérrez, State Senator Miguel Del Valle, Cook County Commissioner

Roberto Maldonado, State Rep. Willie Delgado, and Alderman Billy Ocasio in what turned out to be one of the most interesting and highly heated races in the city.

Edgar López used every single trick in the book to try to win this election. In his campaign he alleged that Cynthia Soto was running as a democrat but had voted republican numerous times, that she was a Mexican so how could she represent a Puerto Rican neighborhood, that she was a radical conservative and anti-women, and at the same time that she had aliened herself with community terrorists, and that she was only out for her own special interest. Alleging that that her supporters were all terrorist or linked to terrorist organizations, and that they were guilty of fraud and corruption, hoping that the community would respond. The community did respond, and voted against all the lies that López had put out and voted against all the damage that he had done as a State Representative. Edgar López had close down a community clinic that dealt with the issue of infant mortality, as well as helped create the scandal at Roberto Clem-



Taken from The West Town Free Press

ente High School that basically destroyed that school. In his campaign he took credit for all the work that was done at Clemente because he is proud of that work; as was mention in various articles that surfaced during the campaign. Edgar López was only serving the needs of special interest and major tobacco and liquor lobbyist, not the needs of the community, as was mention by a Sun-Times article that called him one of the worst Legislators in Springfield.

Overall in the city of Chicago the voter turn out was at around 32%. While in the Humboldt Park area which is historically known for low voter turn out in some precincts recorded over 58% turnout. The race between Mendoza and Silva produced around a total of 7,000 votes; the race in the Forth district produced close to 12,000 votes with Soto winning by 1,244 votes.





# Global Crimes!

# Local Action!

## *Reclaim May Day in Chicago*

Join us at 11am on Monday, May 1st, 2000 at Division & Western

# Demonstrate

## Unconditional Amnesty for All Immigrants! Oppose U.S. Militarism Worldwide!

- *U.S. out of Vieques!*
- *U.S. out of the Philippines!*
- *U.S. out of Colombia!*

Stop the Exploitation of Day Laborers!  
Freedom for all Political Prisoners!  
End Sweatshop Labor!  
Stop Police Brutality!

Sponsored by Pueblo Sin Frontiers, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center & Prairie Fire Organizing Committee. For more information please call: 773-278-6706

Also you can contact the Union for Puerto Rican Students and *Que Ondee Sola* at 773-583-4050 ext. 3805 or email us at [queondeesola@hotmail.com](mailto:queondeesola@hotmail.com)

- Our march will begin at 11am in Humboldt Park at the corner of Division and Western with a short rally.
- Then we will march to the intersection of Halsted, Milwaukee and Grand to join with a march from Pilsen.
- Our march will then continue to the Tribune Plaza, East of Michigan, North of the Chicago River, for a rally.