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## Que Ondee Sola - March 2012

Juan Morales

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*Que Ondee Sola*  
March 2012 Vol. 40 No. 3

**CATHERINE**  
**MATOS**  
**OLIVO**

Galactic Vision:  
other territories and  
somatic landings

*In Celebration of Puerto Rican &  
Latina Women*



# Editorial

Jessie Fuentes

International Women's Day and Women's History Month is an occasion in which we respect, appreciate, and love our women as we celebrate their economic, political, and social achievements. As we celebrate the achievements of women we think about women like Lolita Lebron who brought consciousness around the issue of Puerto Rico being a colonial property.

As we become activist we think about the women who fought against La Operacion when women were being sterilized without knowledge of it. As we fight for gender equality we remember women like Julia De Burgos, a poeta that wrote stories, which Puerto Rican women all over the world can relate to. Puerto Rican and other Latina women in our society are marginalized and disenfranchised everyday, and therefore, we should celebrate and acknowledge the contribution of women everyday. In Puerto Rico and Latin America women are struggling to gain respect in the work place, women continue to get sexually and physically abuse, and it is due to the stigma that women are less than. Historically, women were the first people to obtain knowledge, they were the first chemists, the first doctors, the first farmers, and they were the first many things. We as women have struggled for political and social equality, we have created movements that have impacted

society as a whole, and we deserve to be recognized.

In this edition, we feature a woman by the name of Catherine Matos-Olivio. Matos-Olivio is a very strong and powerful woman that is a survivor of breast cancer. She is a professor at the School of Artes Plasticas in Puerto Rico. For the last two years, Professor Matos-Olivio has used art as a form of healing and as a platform to share her experience with women around the world. As one examines her art pieces, one can feel her pain, but one can also experience her personal liberation through art. To be a woman is to be strong and beautiful, and to be a survivor of breast cancer is a further testament to that.

As a young Lesbian Latina activist it means a great deal to have gender equality. I am a daughter of a Puerto Rican Lesbian, and growing up I seen my mother struggle to provide for our family. My mother has been sexually harassed and physically abused by men in her workplace, and these are conditions I refuse to allow to continue. I envision a world where the next generation of women can have the same opportunities as men, and where Puerto Rican women can have the same opportunities as White women.



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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.



# Femicide

by Rebecca Rios



Throughout history, we hear about the oppression and struggle of women. The struggling cries for women rights are heard and silenced around the world. However, in Juarez, Mexico, it is not just about the struggle of women rights, it is about the struggle for women lives. Femicide is a term that was coined to describe the genocide of women. For almost two decades, young women have been kidnapped, raped, and murdered in Juarez. No one really knows how many, but according to Amnesty International, it is estimated that as many as 800 bodies have been found and as many as 3,000 women have gone missing in Juarez. Bodies of women who have been marginalized and who have struggled to support themselves and their families have been found in ditches and caves, and nothing is being done to stop it. Families are not getting justice and women who are taking their places are not being protected. The government and the companies in charge of Maquiladoras set up in Juarez are indirectly to blame for this femicide.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, the North American Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA) was implemented to remove tariff barriers between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. NAFTA encouraged industries by providing an international market. Many Corporations began setting up factories, known as Maquiladoras, in Juarez, Mexico. These Maquiladoras import materials to be assembled into products for cheap labor and then are to be exported internationally. Young women are seen as the perfect employee at these factories because they don't need experience or skill. Also, young women who are below or meet the poverty line are ideal workers because they are replaceable and less likely to form unions or fight back against unfair policies.

They work 12 hours a day in these maquiladoras and earn only about \$55 a week. Most women migrate to this city and ones like it just to find work in the maquiladoras searching for a better living and to be able to sustain themselves and their families. Even with the great risk of danger they face, most young women have no other options for work. These women then commute to their homes at all hours of the night by bus or on foot, through desert areas, and dimly lit streets, with no protection or security. These companies, who have increased their profits immensely with these maquiladoras, have yet to provide help for their workers who fall victim to this femicide.

In Juarez, which is commonly known as the most violent city in the world, it is easy for police officers and criminal investigators to ignore the disappearances of these women and act as though they can't do enough. However, this sense of indifference on the issue by the police, the



government, and the corporations leaves the women and families to fend for themselves. One long time activist and poet, Sandra Castillo, who coined the phrase “Ni una mas” which means “not one more”, was also murdered last year in January. Her memory lives on through her poems and her saying “Ni una mas” which has become the call of those who work to put an end to this femicide. Casa Amiga, which is a center for women in Juarez that deals with women who are raped or abused, was officially opened in 1999 to help and assist these women who suffered violence.

However, without laws and action being taken by the government and police to stop this violence,

there really can be no change. The activists, and Casa Amiga in this city can only do so much to help women be aware of these issues but really nothing to prevent it from occurring again. There are no policies, protective government services, or rights for women, therefore the ones affected by this issue are the ones who are left struggling to make a change. We have fought against apartheid, suffrage in the U.S., and inequality throughout our history. Why not fight to end this femicide now!? How much longer will we allow this dehumanization of women to continue? How many more women will have to die in Juarez before something is done? I say, “Ni una mas”.

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## **A Woman’s Right to Control Her Body**

By: Josue Contreras

If you haven’t been watching the news lately, a woman’s right to choose has been at the center of political and religious debate once more. However, it isn’t about *Roe v. Wade* this time, but rather the Obama administration versus the Catholic Church in a battle over who has to pay for contraception. Those little pills have helped many woman in America choose when they want to start their families & control health issues since being approved by the FDA in 1963—but have you ever stopped to think at what cost. Put aside where you stand on the issue of what women can choose to do with their bodies and take note of what has been done to control their bodies.

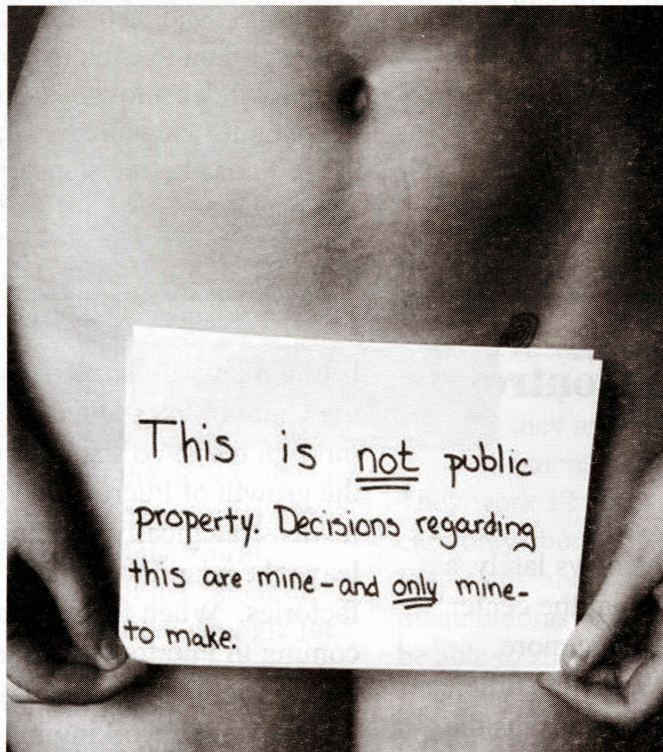
Puerto Rico has long suffered high unemployment rates, which has kept many on the island in a perpetual state of poverty. Rather than look for reasonable economic solutions to the problem, like

lifting many of its restrictive trade regulations, the United States Government during the 1930’s through the 1970’s sought to find ways to control the growth of Puerto Rico’s population. At first, it was strategically enticing Puerto Ricans to leave the island to work in Northeastern U.S. factories. When factories and companies started coming to Puerto Rico to take advantage of U.S. tax exemptions, tens of thousands of Puerto Rican women began working in textile plants (these plants served as the templates for the practice of what has become known as “sweat shops”). In order to not lose productivity from its work force, the managers of these companies encouraged women to get sterilized. By 1934, 67 birth control clinics were opened with federal funds, channeled through the Puerto Rican Emergency Relief Fund, to perform sterilizations. Many private companies opened even more clinics after federal funding ran out. By 1968, 35.3% of Puerto Rican women were sterilized (The Chicago Women’s Liberation Union Archives, undated). The biggest issue with this process, and there are many, is that most



women did it under the false pretext that it was reversible. They were duped or never informed that it was permanent. Their right to bear children was taken from them.

The pro-birth control agenda in Puerto Rico and the anti-birth control laws of the U.S., along with a densely populated island, made Puerto Rico the perfect place for Dr. Gregory Pincus to conduct his human trials of the drug that would eventually become “the pill.” Pincus hoped that by showing Puerto Rican women could successfully use oral contraceptives, he could quiet critics’ concerns that oral contraceptives would be too “complicated” for women in developing nations and American inner cities to use. He knew that if he could demonstrate that the poor, uneducated, women of Puerto Rico could follow the Pill regimen, then women anywhere in the world could too (Public Broadcast Station “The Puerto Rican Pill Trials,” 1999). The trials began in 1956 with participants receiving high dosages of Enovid (a synthetic oral progesterone) to ensure they would not get pregnant during the trial. A 10-milligram dose of the pill caused 17% of women to have serious sustained bouts of nausea, dizziness, headaches, stomach pain and vomiting. Despite this high percentage, Dr. Pincus and his partner Dr. Rock chose to focus on the fact that the initial version of “the pill”



had a 100% effectiveness rate. Another audacious overlook was the fact that three women died while participating in the trial and no investigation was done to determine if their deaths were related to taking “the pill.” In later years, Pincus’s team would be accused of deceit, colonialism and the exploitation of poor women of color. The women had only been told that they were taking a drug

that prevented pregnancy, not that this was a clinical trial, that the Pill was experimental or that there was a chance of potentially dangerous side effects (Public Broadcast Station “The Puerto Rican Pill Trials,” 1999). Once again misinformed and taken advantage of, Puerto Rican women’s health were put at risk and their right choose what they thought was best for their body and way of life was taken from them.

As Que Ondee Sola celebrates International Woman’s Day, we hope that this story has given you a glimpse into

the importance of women’s rights. Because of the misinformation and sheer disregard of their humanity, entire towns in Puerto Rico are dying because one third of a generation of Puerto Rican women were stripped of right to give birth to the next generation Puerto Ricans. Women, the world over, now have safe effective drugs to control pregnancy and health problems because thousands of Puerto Rican women suffered through unregulated trials of the original pill. Imagine what other horrible actions are happening to women as you read this article because someone disregards the humanity of women and the rights they have.



# Julia de Burgos: A Modern Woman

by Abraham Esparza

On September 14, 2010, in a ceremony held in San Juan, the United States Postal Service honored Julia de Burgos's life and literary work with issuance of a first postage stamp, the 26<sup>th</sup> release in the postal system's Literary Arts series. A Toronto based artist, Jody Hewgill, created the stamp's portrait depicting the poet becoming the first Puerto Rican woman to be represented on a postal stamp honored her. Julia de Burgos was born in Carolina, Puerto Rico on February 17, 1914. She was raised in a poor section of Carolina called Barrio Santa Cruz where she was the oldest of thirteen children, however six of her youngest siblings died because of malnutrition. Her family's poverty did not keep her from developing a love for nature and her country as noted in her first work in Rio Grande de Loiza: "My childhood was all a poem in the river and a river in the poem of my first dream."

By the age of 19 Burgos was graduating from the University of Puerto Rico with a degree in teaching. She became a teacher at Feijoo Elementary School in Barrio Cedro Arriba of Naranjito, Puerto Rico. She also worked as a writer for a children's program on public radio, but was reportedly fired for her political beliefs. It was the love for literature that led her to write poetry. Some her early literary influences were Luis Llorens Torres, Clara Lair, Rafael Alberti and Pablo Neruda. By the early 1930's, Burgos was already a published writer in journals and newspapers. She published three books that contained a collection of her poems. For her first two books she did a tour around the island promoting herself by giving book readings of her poems. Her third book was



published posthumously in 1954. Burgos's lyrical poems are a mixture of her intimacy, her land and the social struggle of the oppressed. Many critics proclaim that her poetry anticipated the work of feminist writers and poets of other Hispanic authors. In one of her poems, she writes: "I am life, strength, woman."

She received numerous awards and recognitions for her work and was celebrated by poets including Pablo Neruda, who stated that her calling was to be the greatest poet of the Americas. Although her literature was praised it was her endless struggle to gain independence from the United States that made her a woman of power and importance to the Puerto Rican people. She became a member of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, headed by Pedro



# Soplos de creatividad y coraje en un sketchbook

Por Dalila Rodriguez

**E**n la vida de algunos seres humanos existen momentos que son delicados equilibrios entre la desolación y la plenitud, dos de los polos de la muerte, según quienes han estado cercanos a ella. Como contraparte, la ilusión por la vida, esa pulsión generadora de crear, sólo se ve asomada en momentos precisos; a soplos que, aunque



breves, movilizan la visión del mundo. Al sobrecogedor despliegue de creatividad le nombramos arte. El arte da vida aun en las situaciones en que la probabilidad de la muerte

es la que mejor ilustra el proceso íntimo. No pretendo describir la pulsión de muerte como la muerte en sí, mas bien como una fuerza que nos obliga y alista en la búsqueda de un objeto. En el caso de la artista y profesora Catherine Matos Olivo fue la inmovilidad la que la condujo al primer escenario de su más reciente obra *Galactic Vision: The Sketchbook Project Of My Cancer Year*.

Por la enfermedad pasé mucho tiempo acostada, fue cuando empecé a ilustrar. Porque enseñé esa materia pero no ilustré. El libro manifiesta el caos de mis emociones cuando me diagnosticaron cáncer, dejando el riguroso análisis de la ciencia a un lado, explica Catherine Matos Olivo, creadora de un registro amplio en las artes plásticas del país.

La característica más importante del diario del año del cáncer no es la belleza en sí o el realismo *per se*, sino su honestidad; así como la vida de la obra en sí misma, independiente, y su influencia sobre el mundo circundante. Sostiene una visión del arte como forma de regeneración psíquica. La fuerza confrontacional de *Galactic Vision* nos acerca a la historicidad de la enfermedad, la suya, y cómo la vivió. No obstante, la narrativa no se realiza del modo clásico de la psicología de las cinco etapas que pasan los pacientes a quienes se les ha diagnosticado una enfermedad terminal y aplicables a cualquier catástrofe personal.

*Galactic Vision* es un diario con 120 imágenes digitales, un sofisticado *scrapbook* que documenta con rayos X, dibujos, fotos, códigos alfanuméricos y otras evidencias, los procedimientos médicos a los que esta mujer de 33 años ha estado sometida desde que se enteró de su padecimiento. La publicación se suplementa con tres ensayos escritos por tres mujeres. Valerie Pintado Hernández trata el aspecto psicológico del tema. La artista y educadora Brenda Torres Figueroa habla sobre



el tema de la desnaturalización del cuerpo y sus paradigmas cambiables. La curadora y escritora Mercedes Trelles se enfoca en el componente artístico. El diseño cuenta Catherine suaviza el tema: hace que te lo tragues. Es un libro oscuro, por contenido y forma. Pero como las ilustraciones son amarillas, hay algo de luz, sostiene.

El efecto que tiene la recreatividad artística en los enfermos es un tema cada vez más publicado en revistas y *journals* de medicina a través del mundo. Ello libera de ansiedad, distrae del dolor, aleja del aburrimiento y extiende destrezas comunicativas que generan bienestar en los pacientes, entre otros beneficios, de acuerdo con el programa *Artist-in-Residence* del Instituto de Cáncer de la Universidad de Nueva York.

La editorial Colección Maravilla, y en especial el artista Teo Freytes, miembro fundador de dicha casa publicadora han colaborado con esmero en la producción del libro. La estética lóbrega que exhibe ejemplifica la atmósfera una vez queda enterada de la enfermedad. Las acciones, en este caso las ilustraciones, simbolizan la voluntad de la artista. Cuando el médico te dice que tienes cáncer la palabra te resuena y piensas sólo en MUERTE. Todo lo demás que precede esa conversación es como verlo en *mute*. Es todo acerca del misterio que envuelve a la quimioterapia” ha dicho Catherine.

El *corpus* artístico de Catherine ha sido expuesto en Austria, Turquía, España, en varios lugares de Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico, entre otros. Curiosamente, ella lleva rondando temas relacionados a las patologías desde hace un tiempo. Con **JM-6 (2006-08)** realizó una interesante excavación arqueológica en lo que fue el patio de su casa en Levittown. La tituló *Objetos Encontrados* y con ella hizo su particular declaración y

llamado a los recuerdos, tras ser parte del proceso de desintegración de la enfermedad degenerativa de su madre. El proyecto constaba de varias dimensiones y materiales, todas alusivas a la memoria rota, al quebranto del Alzheimer en el enfermo y en sus familiares.

“Inicialmente me negué. Porque mi arte suele ser *documentativo*. No, no voy a hacer otra pieza sobre mí se dijo. Pero es que es natural, estoy en este proceso. No pude controlarlo, razonó. ¿Para qué frenar algo tan instintivo? Durante el diálogo Catherine observaba el amplio salón donde estábamos. Preguntó de quién son las pinturas que cuelgan en la pared. Para una artista es fácil reconocer que la mayoría fueron ejecutadas por la misma persona: es que tienen un tratamiento bien particular, nunca había visto este tipo de trabajo aquí en Puerto Rico. Le dije que el artista se formó en México aunque es del patio. Me gustan, dejó saber.

¿En qué estábamos?, preguntó posteriormente. Le recordé el hilo de la conversación y atajó: Que me da cosa convertirme en la Frida Khalo puertorriqueña. Mostré sorpresa ante su preocupación y con torpeza le expresé que comprendía la analogía de las tragedias en ambos casos pero *¿O será que te parece pretensiosa la comparación entre ustedes?”*. Sin haber notado, o sin haberle importado mucho mi rubor, Catherine explicó: Tú sabes, son cuatro obras sobre mí misma y lo puñetera que ha estado mi vida. Acto seguido le comenté que, en cualquier caso, el arte de Frida Kahlo es admirable y la idea de ser comparada con ella debiera complacerla.

¡No, no quiero ser esa! Esa artista no. ¿Por qué tengo que ser el ejemplo de mi generación? ¡Ay no! Hasta cierto punto halaga que te digan cuánto te admiran y sé que soy un ejemplo para mis estudiantes, porque me lo dejan



saber, pero no quiero ocupar ese lugar: ¡que sea otra!

Tras lo dicho, rió fuertemente y narró la anécdota de cuando en medio de una clase le dio un *hot-flash*, provocado por la quimioterapia.

En ese entonces, se arrancó la peluca frente a sus estudiantes y se abanicó con ella. De momento me doy cuenta de que la tengo en la mano y les veo la cara a todos y les pido disculpas. Pero ellos han sido tan comprensivos. Me dejan saber su cariño y solidaridad, expresa Catherine.

Catherine es una mujer fuerte. No hago referencia a su fortaleza porque está luchando contra el cáncer y lleva la delantera. Su carácter es animoso, de lenguaje corporal agresivo y palabras precisas. Varios tatuajes grandes y llamativos alrededor de su cuerpo, junto a su mirada incisiva, dejan claro que se siente segura puesta en sus dos pies. Sin embargo, saberse enfermo puede socavar a cualquiera.

¿Tan mal me porté? Aún cuando no creo ni en la luz eléctrica se me hace difícil no culparme. Es inevitable pensar así. Estudié en una escuela religiosa y algo de ese adoctrinamiento debe quedar en mi inconsciente. Pero no creo en esa mierda de la esperanza, sentencia Catherine. A lo largo de nuestra charla nos alejamos del proyecto artístico para hablar del cáncer.

La escuché. Ella despotricó, se calmó y me mostró su atractiva sonrisa. Después arremetió contra las políticas públicas de salud y la contaminación. Me contó que vivió en Vieques y que a menudo se cuestiona si fue allí. Yo nadé durante un año esas aguas que están bien contaminadas. Tú sabes cómo está el cáncer en esa población, indicó Catherine. Añadió además que vivió una temporada en Nueva York cuando explotaron las Torres Gemelas. Cada rato salen noticias relacionadas al cáncer y enfermedades respiratorias que padecen las personas que ayudaron o vivían cerca de la zona, reflexiona. Sugiere que calibra un pensamiento y agrega:

No tenía que removerme el seno, mucho menos los dos. Fue opcional, lo hice racionalmente. Las estadísticas demuestran que el cáncer podría volver aparecer si me dejaba los tejidos mamaros, tras explicarlo, un silencio tupido nos envolvió.

Ay me siento como si estuviera en el despacho de Sigmund Freud, expuso seguido de una carcajada. Bromeé que ahora la halagada era yo, y me sinceré sobre mis aspiraciones en el campo del psicoanálisis, entonces reímos juntas. Me miró a los ojos y añadió: Esto es bueno para mí, Dalila. Mientras más yo hablo de mi proceso más me descubro y hay cosas que si uno no las verbaliza. . . .

—*Salen en los sueños* bromeé. Luego pregunté: *¿cuándo fue la última vez que soñaste?* Respondió que hace tiempo, pero que no es de las que recuerdan los sueños. La incito a que me lo cuente. Lo hizo.

También me narró lo engorroso que es recibir quimioterapia: cómo es que conectan agujas y pasan variedad de químicos, que dependiendo del estado particular va de media hora hasta seis horas corridas, como fue una vez su caso. Es un proceso bien doloroso, físicamente, porque te duele además de agotarte, indicó. Percibí que de alguna modo este tema en particular la animaba. —*¿Cuál es el nombre de tu cáncer?*

Ductal Carcinoma. Se origina en el ducto mamario, el tubito que bota la leche. Me enteré en la tercera etapa. Ya estaba bastante adelantado. Es un cáncer que invadió otra área y se le considera metástasis local. Tenía cuatro nódulos linfáticos positivos, que son como un expreso. O sea, que existe un 50 por ciento de probabilidad de que haya pasado a otro órgano. ¿Pero cómo saberlo? Vivo con terror. Me paso pidiendo exámenes. Trato de no pensarlo y no desperdicio mi tiempo. Ahora escojo las batallas, los mal humores.

Hubo un momento en que estaba bien molesta. Porque pesaba 50 libras demás ¡tú sabes lo



que es eso?! Era por la quimioterapia. Tenía los senos removidos y encima estaba calva. Yo no me miraba en el espejo. Si me veía un momento por equivocación rompía a llorar. No me considero vanidosa ni descuidada, pero no podía bregar con los espejos. Sin pestañas ni cejas. ¡Es que pareces un cabrón *alien*!”

Catherine es joven, enseña en dos universidades y posee una carrera prometedora porque es talentosa. Por fortuna, cuenta con buenos amigos que se preocupan por ella. Aunque admite que a raíz de la enfermedad unos cuantos se han alejado. Tengo un espectro nuevo de amigos y estoy muy agradecida por el profesionalismo y apoyo que he recibido de los médicos del Hospital Oncológico Dr. Isaac González. Sonrió en lontananza.

¿Sabes? Sé que el aspecto de lo físico no lo superé porque siempre estuve con la peluca. Hay otras personas que lo aceptan y se la quitan puntualizó Catherine.

*Pero, aceptar que no lo aceptaste es también una superación ¿o no?*

Pues mira sí, tienes razón. Es que me daba tanto coraje que me dijeran que me veía bonita calva. Yo que tenía una súper peluca natural imi maranta! para luego estar desnuda. La cuestión del cáncer es que mientras más te informas y te educas más seguro te sientes; puedes tomar mejores decisiones y no fantasear. Buscar alternativas, como ir al psicólogo para que te dé herramientas para bregar, precisó.

*¿Qué te parecen los juegos en la red para concientizar sobre el cáncer de los senos?*

Odio la propaganda del cáncer. Y los jueguitos también. Me molesta muchísimo que lo proyecten como una enfermedad *fashion*. Detesto que lo asocien con rosa, porque sé como artista y por mi profesión que el rosa no es de mujer solamente. Y el rosa lo utilizan simbólicamente para sugerir que es una enfermedad que les da únicamente a las mujeres. A los hombres también les da cáncer

de mama, es una población menor, pero existe, sostuvo.

“Otra cosa que me enfogona es que Kentucky (el *fast food*) sea pintado de rosa para crear conciencia. ¡Qué hipocresía! Si compras un *bucket* ayudas a los pacientes de cáncer. Cuando todo el mundo sabe que ese lugar manipula genéticamente sus pollos y esa comida es alta en carcinógenos. También me molesta la propaganda de la mujer que tiene cáncer y va al baño de la discoteca y se quita la peluca y los rellenos del pecho mientras se mira en el espejo. ¡¿Qué es eso?! Durante mi enfermedad no he podido discotecar, eso no es así. Lo hacen ver como que siempre hay esperanza. La publicidad le saca partido para hacerlo un simbolismo de fe, sentencia.

*—¿Cómo consideras adecuado crear conciencia del cáncer?*

Con el lazo rosa ese no es.

Posterior a la contestación, el silencio invadió nuevamente el salón. Me agradeció la pregunta y meditó sobre ella. Luego, reflexionó: Si yo hubiese tenido a mi mamá saludable, esto no me hubiese sucedido.

*—¿Lo dices porque las madres se la pasan advirtiendo sobre las enfermedades?*

¡Claro! Mira, lo que hay que hacer es educar a la población sobre la buena alimentación. Denunciar los lugares en donde se contaminan las aguas y el medioambiente en general. Dejar a un lado los clichés de cómo es que la enfermedad ataca y educar: no tienes que tener historial familiar de cáncer para desarrollarlo, no es cierto que si amamantas no te dará cáncer. El cáncer le da a cualquier persona de cualquier edad. Hay que ir al médico y hacerse exámenes, puntualizó.

La artista agarró su libro. Me lanzó una mirada afirmativa, sonrió cálidamente y me dijo que deseaba compartir algo conmigo. Se levantó del cómodo asiento y me explica que porque soy mujer y se ha sentido a gusto esta noche, desea



Albizu Campos, and elected Secretary General of the Daughters of Freedom. Due to time and constraints, her activities with the party affected her marriage, which led to her divorce with Ruben Rodrigues Beauchamp in 1937. Burgos love life will continue to be a constantly peaks and valleys.

She became involved Dr. Juan Isidro Jimenes Grullon, a Dominican Physician, who according to him, many of her poems during their time period together were inspired by the love that she felt for him. They both traveled to Cuba and New York together, where she studied in the University of Havana and then later became a journalist in New York City for a progressive newspaper called Pueblos Hispanos. As her relationship Grullon ended she left Cuba to live in New York where she would fall into depression and alcoholism. She died in 1953, at the age of thirty-nine, poor, sick and lonely in the immigrant port city of New York. Nearly sixty years after her tragic death on the streets of New York, she is the most celebrated of Puerto Rican poets. Her popularity has much to do with her ideological consciousness, her struggles to free herself from social and literary confinement, to redefine herself, her art and her society. "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 on the promissory earth would not accept walking backwards and went forward, forward..."

#### **To Julia de Burgos**

*Already the people murmur that I am your enema because they say that in verse I give the world your me.*

*They lie, Julia de Burgos. They lie, Julia de Burgos. Who rises in my verses is not my voice. It is my voice because you are the dressing and the essence is me; and the most profound abyss is spread between us.*

*You are the cold doll of social lies, and me, the virile starburst of the human truth.*

*You, honey of courtesan hypocrisies; not me; in all my poems I undress my heart.*

*You are like your world, selfish; not me who gambles everything betting on what I am.*

*You are only the ponderous lady very lady; not me; I am life, strength, woman.*

*You belong to your husband, your master; not me; I belong to nobody, or all, because to all, to all I give myself in my clean feeling and in my thought.*

*You curl your hair and paint yourself; not me; the wind curls my hair, the sun paints me.*

*You are a housewife, resigned, submissive, tied to the prejudices of men; not me; unbridled, I am a runaway Rocinante snorting horizons of God's justice.*

*You in yourself have no say; everyone governs you; your husband, your parents, your family, the priest, the dressmaker, the theatre, the dance hall, the auto, the fine furnishings, the feast, champagne, heaven and hell, and the social, "what will they say".*

*Not in me, in me only my heart governs, only my thought; who governs in me is me. You, flower of aristocracy; and me, flower of the people. You in you have everything and you owe it to everyone, while me, my nothing I owe to nobody.*

*You nailed to the static ancestral dividend, and me, a one in the numerical social divider, we are the duel to death who fatally approaches.*

*When the multitude run rioting leaving behind ashes of burned injustices, and with the torch of the seven virtues, the multitudes run after the seven sins, against you and against everything unjust and inhuman, I will be in their midst with the torch in my hand.*



# Memories that shaped who I am

by Lourdes Lugo, former editor of QOS



By the time I started at Northeastern my political/ community work had begun, so naturally I gravitated to *Que Ondee Sola* as the space that allowed me to form the intellectual aspect of that work. While working in *Que Ondee Sola*, I had to learn to write and express my ideas in a cohesive and impactful way. During our meetings, I was able to exchange ideas, and form more critical perspectives on the realities we faced both as a community within the university and the community we lived in. The office of QOS was our real home. Many times we stayed in discussions and exchanges until the university security asked us to leave the premises. We ate, shared, and lived in that space as young women and men building the hope for a better and stronger future.

Sometimes we planned our next moves for a better space, or the Mexican/Caribbean Studies Program, as well as what actions were needed to bring attention to the rampant racism at Northeastern. It was within those walls that we honored our past heroes, and those that were incarcerated, as we enjoyed the everyday existence of each other. As young Puerto Rican women, we found a space to be safe, heard and respected, above all be ourselves. We discovered our strengths and weaknesses, and worked to figure them out. We shared our talents, and sometimes not so much talent. We grew to be in the front of the line when facing injustice, and talk openly about our doubts. I learned the strength of working as a group, and the damage that selfishness could cause others.

*Que Ondee Sola* allowed me to meet students of different cultures and communities across the city of Chicago, hence expanding my perspective of diversity and solidarity with other groups.

It was my work within the UPRS and QOS that solidified my growth and commitment to my community and to the freedom of Puerto Rico, as well as my responsibility to other groups facing the same challenges we face as Puerto Ricans. I always feel proud of the exposure I had while member of both organizations, and recognize that many of my accomplishments are the direct result of the experiences with *Que Ondee Sola* and UPRS.



*L.J.P*

Presents

*Nuestros Labios*

Nuestros Labios (Our Lips) is the name of an event we held last semester. We were inspired by womyn like Eve Ensler and Yolanda Nieves, that used monologues to present an experience to the audience. We decided to create our own monologues. Each member was asked to write about a significant time, experience, and/or person that affected their identity. What began as simple story telling quickly transformed into one of our most powerful events, not only for the audience but for ourselves. Nuestros Labios touches on multiple facets affecting our existence as Latinas. Themes such as sexuality, cultural identity, relationships, immigration, motherhood, and many more, surfaced as we began to expose every layer and shared our secrets with the audience. The following are a select few monologues performed at Nuestros Labios. We share our secrets, from nuestros labios to your corazon.

## Blanquita by Alyssa Santiago

Is there an Alyssa Santiago here? Alyssa Santiago?? Oh ...I guess that's me. Although if I may correct you, it's pronounced Alyssa Santiago. Alyssa can't your mom do anything about your hair?Its so nappy and poofy. Why isn't it straight and pretty like mine?Sorry Alyssa you can't play the part of the princess...you're too chunky. Oh Puerto Rican? That must mean you have a lot of crazy gangbanger family members right?

These are the kind of remarks I heard all throughout grammar school.I remember staring at myself in the mirror with utter hatred.I began to despise my curly, poofy hair and my thick waist (which as you can tell, never really went away). I also began to hate being Puerto Rican. Why couldn't I just be white like the 97% of kids at my school then maybe I could have those pretty golden locks, those sea blue eyes, and that teeny tiny waist. Instead I was thrown into the 3% minority.

I felt like I could relate to no one in my grammar school. They sure as hell didn't know what arroz con gandules was nor did they know what is was like for their Titi's to drop them off at school while blasting merengue in the car. I started to become ashamed of

being Puerto Rican and became obsessed with the idea on how to be more "White."

I recall sitting down during recess one day and watching girls take part in what they called "Irish Step Dancing." I watched as they gradually hopped up switching legs in a motion I've never seen. I went home that day and stood in front of my mirror mocking the steps they performed.

I constantly complained to my mother about being Puerto Rican. I felt like everytime someone spoke about Latinos, a negative remark followed their statement. My mom would always say "Mama, you are who you are, nothing can change that, so be proud!" I didn't wanna listen. In my mind being Latina clearly meant being the worst kind of person. I became so obsessed with the idea of being white. I stuck with this mentality for years. Little did I know the more I focused on learning another cultures traditions, the less I knew about my own.

I remember the first time it hit me. I was sitting in Latin American studies and my professor began speaking about what were going to learn throughout the semester. I rolled my eyes when I heard her say, "All stereotypes are bullshit, we make those up." I



thought in my head, “ Oh god here we go...this is gonna be one of those Mexicans should be legal here...bias type class....well then what’s their excuse for coming here and raping and gawking at our women?”

But to my surprise she spoke with intelligence and honesty. I learned so many different things I never knew. I began reading the articles and books she assigned in class. The material caught my attention in a way I never expected it would. I started becoming angry that my people had such a low college graduate rate. I became upset by the films we watched in class! How dare they pass proposition 187! Everyone should be given an equal chance at education! How

dare they use sterilization and birth control testing on my Puerto Rican women as an indirect form of genocide! I was utterly outraged. By the end of the semester I had this burning love for my culture.

So... you can call me whatever you want ...a white-a-fied latina...white girl...whatever. All I want to say is thank you LIP for helping me to become the intelligent, beautiful, strong Latina who I’ve learned to love. And while I’m still learning im loving every step of the journey...

Oh! I have one last thing to say....” All stereotypes... about any race... are bullshit!”

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## Aliens in America

by Natalie Ortiz

22 years ago the mother ship left me here in this new land. I found myself on new soil settled in what would be my new home taking my first steps saying my first words in this new place. When I was old enough I went to school with the earthlings that looked and sounded like me, in fact we had many similarities the same concerns, like if our gigapets would survive the school day without us, or what the school burgers were actually made of, we had the same soft skin, our smiles with missing teeth, and little feet running and skipping to show each other how our shoes lit up, we were the same.

Through this ‘school’ as you natives called it I learned the alphabet solved math problems and buried my nose in books. I was like them. The better I did teachers said, the more likely I’d be anything I’d wanted to be on this land. I played games, watched tv, went to church, loved school. I was not like my classmates I was one of them... at least that’s what I thought. One day in social studies, a class I much enjoyed when learning about this country’s history I came across something quite intriguing. When I learned what separated them, you, from me.

Aliens were no longer those green things with antennas and 3. Aliens were no longer goat eating monsters, leaving shapes in farmers fields. Aliens were no longer crusty brown creatures making bicycles fly in front of the moon. Aliens I read..were individuals who were in America but came from a foreign country. I looked at myself long and hard when I got home. Sure I didn’t have white skin, blue eyes, straight blonde hair, but I sure didn’t look or act like the aliens I saw in movies or tv. And I sure was not a chupacabras.

But this is how they saw me. An alien. Not worthy of being called a human being on this land. A few miles separated us, but to them a few miles was equivalent to great distances among the galaxies. I listened to the same songs as them, told the same jokes watched the same shows, knew the same language, learned the same history, said the pledge of allegiance every morning, sang every word of the national anthem with pride, wore red white and blue on the 4th of July. I belonged to America, it was my home. But America did not want me. Nor did it see me as a human being. But as an extraterrestrial. A green rough skinned creature with 3 bulging eyes, sharp blood sucking teeth, to be feared, avoided, mistrusted.



## He Left by Stephanie Gomez

I remember the year he left...It was weeks before my 21<sup>st</sup> bday. The plan was to be gone for two weeks to celebrate my abuelitas bday. He left that week, jumped on a plane and its been 4 years since. He left that week. His 5'2, big belly, dark skin, patas de bailarin, just a patch of white hair towards the front of his head...he left that day. That was one of the many times he left. He left at age nine. Still 5'2 a tad bit thinner and no distinguished white patch. He left again at 12...left me with stories of respect and what womyn were supposed to be treated like. He left at 15 when I snuck boys in thru my window and made out behind closet doors. He left at 17 and I searched for him behind all the boys eyes...i imagined his hug as I sat on their laps and imagined his touch as I lay on their beds. He left at 19 when I began to take out my anger and fought and fucked and fought and fucked. He left at 20 when I looked in the mirror and tried to love what I see but it was too hard to imagine that I was still me. I looked for him...i looked for him where I was used to finding him...behind beer bottles, empty shot glasses that still smelled like

aguardiente. I looked for him in Joe Arroyo and Grupo Niche...in Cali Pachangueros and in Lloraras Lloraras Lloraras...I heard him when I closed my eyes and he said Flacuchenta I love you. I visited him when I held really tight and tried to remember what it was like to be loved by him.

See papi ive been looking for you and its getting kind hard to find you cause I cant remember what it was like and its getting harder to believe that your still alive..cause you left me so many times... So many times now I think everyones gonna leave. So many times it took one year for me to get things right with him...so many times my journal consists of names with faces I don't remember..so many times that I keep my heart under lock and key and I wait for the day you come back...For the day that 5'2 big belly dark skin patas de bailarin full white head comes thru the door with arms longer than I remember and a smile I wont forget when you leave again..but please papi please don't leave again.

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## My Dad by Isamarie Schiffino

The man who would be in the room for days, weeks, months straight without eating or showering. The one who used to see things. You remember...Indians, Midgets, my mom cheating in our own house.

I used to run to the crack of his room door to see him sniffing, Jumping high on the bed playing a guitar while making up songs about my mother being so dirty (well in his eyes)

My dad...the reason why I stayed out of the sala at night because he would watch porn all night long,

crying in my room and thinking how disgusting my dad was.

I was the daughter of the man who would stand on the window sill naked and he would run outside with just a towel around his waist. Yeah the whole block knew him even my friends at school would laugh about him

The man that caused my anxiety problems, once I heard a yell I was out the house running somewhere far away, little did they know that when I would go shower I would just splash water on myself pretend I showered and stood by the



door listening paranoid that they were going to fight again so I was prepared to run.

Fights at my house weren't normal Hispanic fights, it consist of breaking phones, slamming doors, broken vases and picture frames, knives going through doors.

My mother suffered so much with so much name calling, you're a pendeja, sucia, cabrona, and the list goes on...Ounces of crack he would do in just ONE day, all I thought about was how my life would be without him. All I can do was prepare myself because his addiction was out of control.

Many nights of rocking my shaking body to sleep wondering if anybody cared that I was suffering and it was messing me up.

The hardest part was the day they raided my house and took my papi, those were the hardest two years of my life. Even though it was hell at home with him there, I was daddy's little girl. If I asked for 5 dollars ill get 50, if I wanted a new dress ill get shoes with it, I was extremely spoiled so those two years I became aware that I

had to become more independent since it was my mom paying bills alone. Even though I had that moment right when he left where I rebelled, It eventually hit me.

My dad...the one that's been cleaned for two whole years, the man I'm not embarrassed of if he goes to my school dressed like Osama with a long beard and a towel on his head, the one that motivates himself to go to the gym to keep his mind off of going back to drugs...Pero papi you don't need to weigh yourself after every meal.

I just want to tell everyone that I did have the hardest childhood, it did affect me but I'm working everyday on it, and it did make me who I am today which is very independent and always happy trying to make people smile but importantly I want to say I have the best dad ever and I'm so proud of him. From a drug addict that did ounces and ounces of drugs a day to a changed man that is looking to be saved from god on his own. I knew that wasn't my dad.

Papi, daddys little girls is very proud of you.

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mostrarme las cicatrices de sus operaciones. Las observé detenidamente. Son grandes y parecían parte del arte del tatuaje que lleva en el pecho. Lejos de adularla o hacerla sentir cómoda aclaro que había visto cicatrices similares pero que puede sentirse orgullosa, pues su piel es muy tersa y las heridas se ven curadas. Sonrió satisfecha y me recuerda que hace tan sólo un mes que le removieron algunas partes. Yo cicatrizo bien. Se pondrán mejores, explicó.

Relajadas, emito el que intuí sería el último comentario del encuentro.

—*Sé que no estás curada del todo, pero te*

*presiento muy sana.*

Si me toca irme, estoy realizada. No que me quiera ir todavía pero siempre he sido muy libre, y eso me da cierta serenidad. He sabido negociar cosas materiales, como mi cuerpo, por la salud. Estoy cogiendo quimioterapia de nuevo pero esta vez se siente distinto. Siento que todo va a estar bien. No tengo tanto miedo como al principio y sé que el hospital será parte de mi vida, ya lo internalicé y no pasa nada.

Continued from Pg13



