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## Que Ondee Sola - May 2015

Juan Morales

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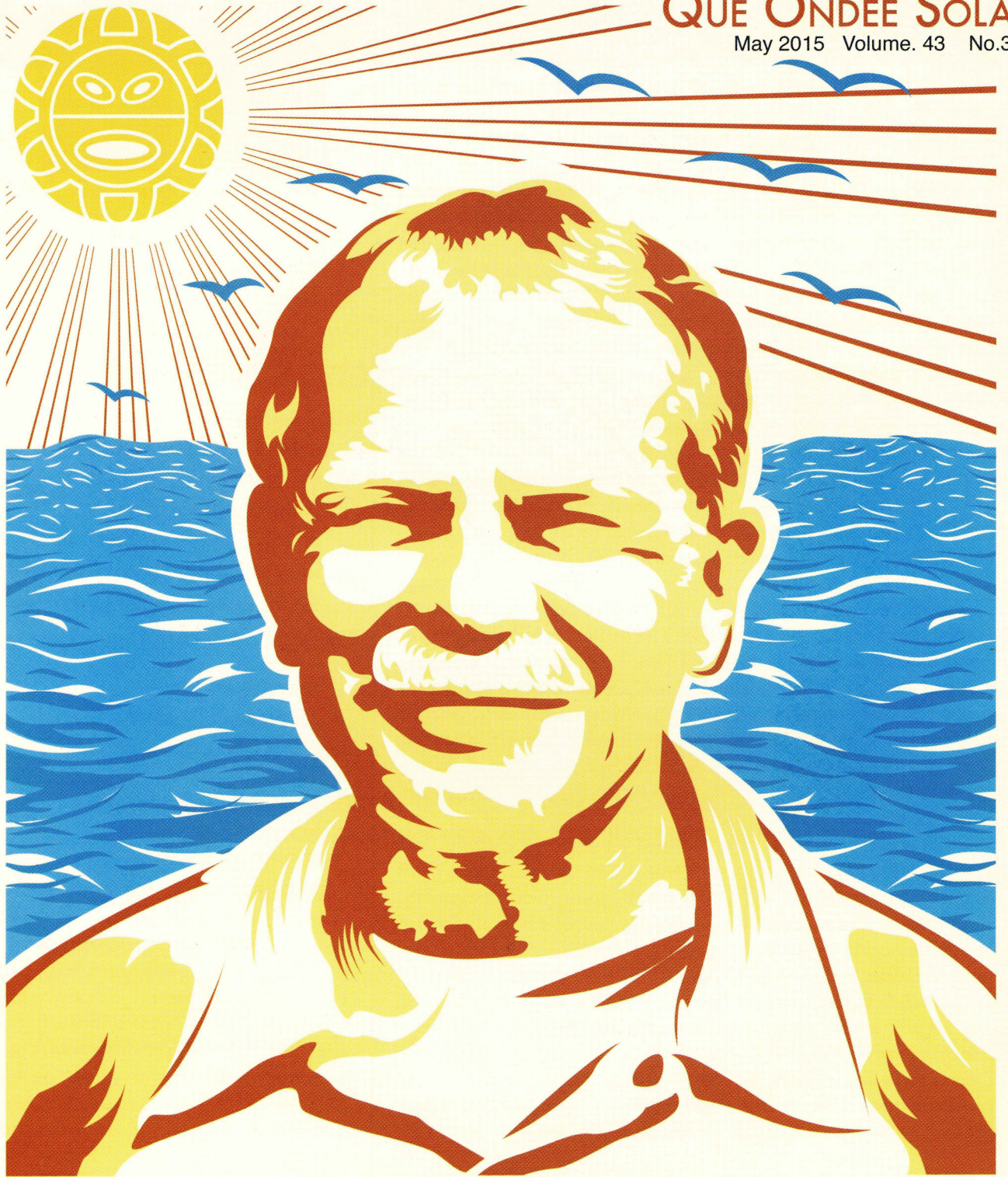
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# QUE ONDEE SOLA

May 2015 Volume. 43 No.3



 **LIBERTAD** 



# Editors' Note

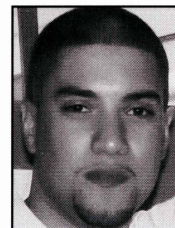
No other issue of Que Ondee Sola (QOS) has given me more satisfaction than this one - dedicated to the Puerto Rican Patriot Oscar López Rivera - since we published the 40th anniversary edition of this magazine.

QOS, Proyecto Pa'lante, The Latino Cultural Center, the Union for Puerto Rican Students are all by-products, at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), of the enormous work which Oscar López Rivera carried out in Chicago's Puerto Rican Latino community. The services and the outreach of these programs at NEIU are deeply rooted in the community organizing practices, which Oscar initiated nearly 50 years ago in Chicago's West Town/Humboldt Park community. Upon his return from the war in Vietnam, in 1967, as a decorated soldier, Oscar took off his war uniform and donned the clothing of a community organizer. He was soon immersed in the lessons of Saul Alinsky, through his mentors Shell Trapp, but soon realized that community organizing was not enough. He, thus, began to deeply delve into the decolonizing works of Frantz Fanon, and the community building theory of Paulo Freire based on *concientización*.

Today, in Chicago's Latino community (not only in NEIU), we can clearly see Oscar's footprints as his legacy continues to inspire us. He helped organize Aspira of Illinois along with Mirta Ramirez. He helped to open the first bilingual - bicultural educational program in the Chicago public school, Jose de Diego Center, which later became the Jose de Diego School. His arrest in 1973, along with 38 others, at the University of Illinois at Chicago led to the creation of the Latino and Latin American Studies program, the Rafael Cintron Latino Cultural Center, and the LAR-ES program at that university; in the community he co-founded El Rincon Community Health Center, the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, the Spanish Coalition for Housing, the opening of Roberto Clemente High School, and set the foundation for the creation of the Bickerdike Housing Development Corporation.

On a personal level, he cofounded 43 years ago, where I am proud to have graduated from, the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School; a school for the most marginalized youth in our community. Without a doubt, Oscar López Rivera – despite being incarcerated for 34 years – left a lasting legacy in our community, which no one can deny. Through the wires, and through his legacy, he challenges our new generation to create a better future. In the words of Subcomandante Marcos, *"In our dreams we have seen another world, an honest world, a world decidedly more fair than the one in which we now live. We saw that in this world there was no need for armies; peace, justice and liberty were so common that no one talked about them as far-off concepts, but as things such as bread, birds, air, water, like book and voice."*

SPECIAL THANKS TO BRIAN HERRERA FOR THE FRONT COVER  
& ELIZAM ESCOBAR FOR THE BACK COVER



Juan Morales



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## Misión

Que Ondee Sola was established in 1972 and remains the oldest Puerto Rican & Latina/o university students publication in the United States. Our mission is to provide the NEIU community with a relevant and engaging publication that deals with student issues with a focus on Puerto Rican 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.

# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

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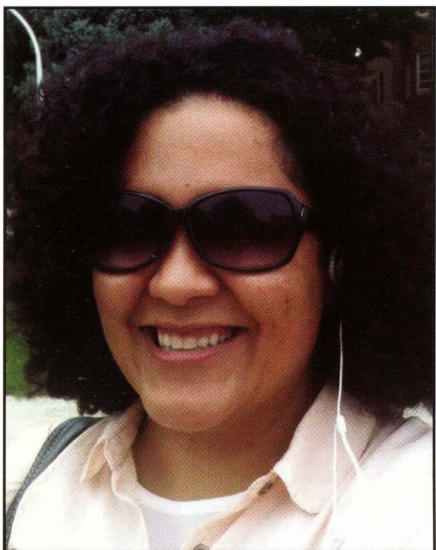
May 2015 Volume. 43 No.3



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## Introduction

By Erika Gisela Abad Merced



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*Since this last letter, received more than five months ago, I have sent at least three. Working with Chicago leaders mobilizing to get more petitions, to get more supporters to get more petitions, I keep asking. How many more? How many more letters will be sent till any of us can guarantee, can celebrate that letter being the last one?*

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*“The colonial world is built on the ordinary vice of deceit. It relies on fraud and force to deceive the natives into thinking that it acts for their betterment, while defining human worth in terms that dehumanize them, turns them into animals by speaking of them in zoological terms...” Gerard A. Hauser, Prisoners of Conscience - Moral Vernaculars of Political Agency (2015: 56)*

Sitting to write about Oscar as a community organizer, as a veteran, as a person who continues to speak out for the right of Puerto Ricans to liberate Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial rule, his letters come to mind.

In *Black Girl Dangerous*, in *Latino Rebels*, the significance of his letters emerge from a personal place. First, I wrote as a woman interested in speaking to an elder about her political concerns regarding the continued presence of heterosexism in various of our communities attempts at mobilizing to fight system violence called either colonialism or oppression. Then I wrote as someone invested in the history and the wisdom his letters represented.

Here, to talk about the community organizer, the veteran, the independista, is to speak of a man who writes everyone who writes him. It is to speak of a man who,

despite the limitation of five letters a day, does his best to say thank you, to offer his advice, to challenge beliefs and misconceptions, to relate what he needs to keep going.

In the last letter I received from him, he writes: *“When I was on the outside world I was told many times that certain goals were impossible to achieve. The person or persons who were saying it was impossible would use excuses. For me hearing that they thought it was impossible just represented a challenge. I would try to do what I was being told it was impossible. I didn’t mind going through the process of trial and error. If I failed the first time I would try and try again. And eventually what I was told was impossible became possible.” (21, January 2015)*

To explain the ways he listened to each person he attempted to organize, the way he privileged relating to their needs, encouraging them to speak for themselves, to speak alongside him against housing and education injustice, it is important to begin with the acknowledge that he dared for the impossible. To understand what the Vietnamese blood on his hands taught him and challenged in him, awoke in him as a person who recognized their systemic repression was all too similar to the racism Puerto Ricans faced in Chicago, the colonial rule under which Puerto Rico is still controlled. To speak of a man of the many ways he stands for something; he fought for others; he worked to reflect to others the best of themselves, is to begin with the acknowledge that he is a persistent person who dares to achieve the impossible.

Each person marching in New York City, each person who walked in Puerto Rico has engaged in something once thought impossible: each of us has walked alongside, has worked alongside others who may disagree with where Puerto Rico should land regarding its sovereign status; we march with others who may disagree with which human has the right to live in which way. And despite these disagreements we come together under the one truth: thirty four years have been long enough. It is time for Oscar to come home.

Since this last letter, received more than five months ago, I have sent at least three. Working with Chicago leaders mobilizing to get more petitions, to get more supporters to get more petitions, I keep asking. How many more? How many more letters will be sent till any of us can guarantee, can celebrate that letter being the last one?



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## ... The Father

By Clarisa López

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*It's been 34 years that you have been far from our house, 24 years that Karina has birthdays without having her grandfather Oscar out of prison. Time seems to happen in a compressed form. I am already 44 and you 72 years old. Our family is not the same. Many have died without saying goodbye to you. You have not been able to meet a new generation of our family.*

---



**D**earest Viejo:

I write this letter as you are on the verge of beginning your 34th year of our first encounter. I still remember when I saw you for the first time. I close my eyes and can see you handcuffed at the waist, by your wrists and hands, orange jumpsuit, long black hair, curly and twisted. You were 38 years old. Those first encounters did not happen in the visiting room, but in a small rehabilitated space at the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in Chicago. I was 10 years old, just a child, never imagining that my life would be filled with visiting my father in “gulags” in the US. For 12 years from 1986 to 1998 my father was kept in total isolation in 2 control units, USP Marion in Illinois and ADX Florence in Colorado. In that period, our visits happened through plexiglas, a cubicle, 2 telephones and 2 seats. While my father was escorted by 5-6 guards, handcuffed, at ADX, the times that I visited him there, the jailers never removed his handcuffs. I have no photographs of those visits, looking at my family album. I have no pictures from age

15 through age 27 with you. I also don't have any pictures of Karina with her grandfather Oscar for the first 7 years of her life. That was due to physical contact visits being prohibited.

It's been 34 years that you have been far from our house, 24 years that Karina has birthdays without having her grandfather Oscar out of prison. Time seems to happen in a compressed form. I am already 44 and you 72 years old. Our family is not the same. Many have died without saying goodbye to you. You have not been able to meet a new generation of our family. I never imagined that after the first visit in 1981, 34 years of prison visits would take place. During these 34 years, we've transformed our relationship into one based on love and respect that we have for each other. I look into your eyes and I see your love for equality, justice and independence for Puerto Rico are as intact and firm now as the day I immaturely questioned your commitment to struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico and were not physically in my life. It took me various years to understand that you had sacrificed neither our family, myself and on the contrary, you wanted my generation to experience a better and more just world. I know now, that for you it was not and is not a sacrifice. You did what your heart and conscience dictated.

I know that some day you will leave that prison, and we will share our lives. I wait for you with my music, my smile, our books and coffees waiting for us. With our Sundays at the beach and trips through our country. But most of all, I wait for you with open arms, full of love, and anxious to hug you in the homeland of your birth.

With love, Clarisa



## SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

...i can go to bed every night  
with a clean conscience  
because there is no blood on  
my hands, and because my  
heart remains full of love  
and compassion.

i was born Boricua, i will  
keep being Boricua, and will  
die a Boricua.

-Oscar López Rivera



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## ... Political Prisoner

By Luis V. Gutiérrez

Originally 5/27/2015 by Publish by Claridad

*Far from being a divisive political issue, the effort to release Oscar López Rivera unites Puerto Ricans and people of conscience across class and geography, across party and ideology. The slogan "One Voice for Oscar" – the theme of a march in New York City on May 30 – is powerful and accurate.*



In the late 1990s, standing up for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners was a pretty lonely place to stand. My staff and some of my congressional colleagues were against my involvement in the campaign to win the release of the first eleven prisoners that came from President Bill Clinton in 1999.

Now, fifteen or so years later, a lot has changed politically, but Oscar López Rivera remains the single remaining Puerto Rican political prisoner still in federal prison. There is broad consensus among Puerto Ricans that after 34 years of incarceration, enough is enough. Oscar should be allowed to leave prison and live with his family in Illinois, Puerto Rico, or wherever he chooses.

Far from being a divisive political issue, the effort to release Oscar López Rivera unites Puerto Ricans and people of conscience across class and geography, across

party and ideology. The slogan "One Voice for Oscar" – the theme of a march in New York City on May 30 – is powerful and accurate.

Last October, I went with the sitting Governor of Puerto Rico, Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla, to visit with Oscar at the federal prison where he is held in Terra Haute, Indiana. The Governor did not meet with Oscar clandestinely. It was publicized and the Governor wrote about his experience. The head of the Puerto Rican government understands that every political constituency and faction in Puerto Rico supports releasing Oscar.

Many in Washington still need convincing that it is time to release Oscar López Rivera. I think those fighting hardest for Oscar's release, including his brother and his attorney and the Puerto Rican Members of Congress are optimistic that President Obama and the Department of Justice will act. Until that time, we continue to make sure that people hear about Oscar's story and join our effort for his release.

On a personal note, I have come to know Oscar as a kind, compassionate, and intelligent leader. He is a friend and mentor who loves Puerto Rico as I do. He is a patriot and not a threat to anyone. Rather, he is a father and grandfather who should be allowed to live his life with his family and loved ones.

This is one simple, straight-forward act of justice and mercy that President Obama and his Administration can take for Oscar Lopez Rivera that will be welcomed with overwhelming and genuine gratitude by all Puerto Ricans.

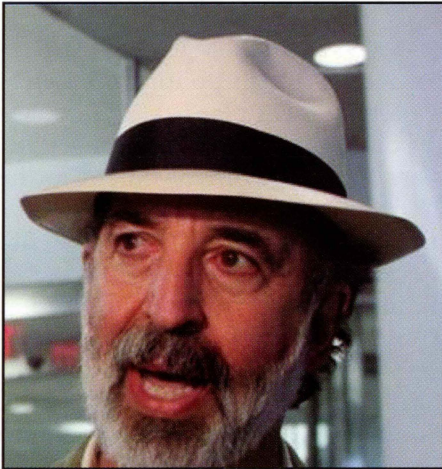


# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## ... Fighter for the Independence of Puerto Rico

By Eduardo Villanueva Muñoz CDHPR Spokesman

*As an independentista, Oscar has become an icon of resistance of his people and a moral reference for fighting colonialism in Puerto Rico*



Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States since the year they invaded us (1898) and subjected us to a military regime, degrading the value of our currency by 60% and replacing diversified agriculture with a monoculture of sugarcane, which subjugated and greatly impoverished our people. The US Supreme Court defined our relationship with the federal power as an unincorporated territory. For them, we have a sort of membership in the US, which would even allow them to sell us to another country if they desired, as defined by the White House reports on our current relationship. It was against this colonial condition that Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party faced off, through open elections (1932), through educational routes, in international bodies, fighting what is a crime against humanity, that which has been defined as colonialism. After the 1950 nationalist revolt against the establishment of the Commonwealth, a fierce persecution began against the entire independence movement, whether nationalists or not, and the gag rule, similar to the Smith Act, was passed in the US, which caused a wave of immigration that

orchestrated the fleeing of independentistas with the approval of the scheme by the official regime in Puerto Rico as well as the federal government. Oscar López met several of these nationalists and independentistas upon his return from Vietnam and he began to develop his political and anti-colonial consciousness, which eventually led to him becoming a highly effective community organizer in Chicago.

He participated in many fights through peaceful protests, the rescue of urban spaces, the re-claiming of spaces for housing, demand for educational opportunities for minorities, and anti-colonial political education, which earned him moral and political authority in the community of Chicago, and which also led to the federal government fearing him. He was imprisoned in 1981 (May 29) and charged with seditious conspiracy, which is equivalent to imposing federal jurisdiction over a colonial territory as covered by international law, considering that colonization is a crime against humanity. He has been tortured with sleep deprivation, isolation for twelve years, deprivation of colors and sensations. Oscar has never abdicated his principles and has always been an example of resistance and struggle.

He has become a painter of great quality and his art has been used to perpetuate the image of figures in our struggles for independence and social justice. The cry to free him has become a banner of struggle of trade unions, churches, student movements, political parties and figures from various ideologies, including Nobel Peace Prize winners, as well as international movements and organizations, including resolutions in support of the UN Committee on decolonization.

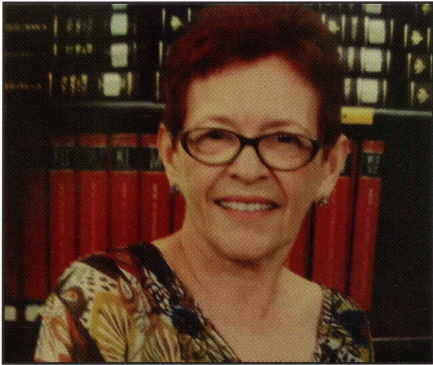
As an independentista, Oscar has become an icon of resistance of his people and a moral reference for fighting colonialism in Puerto Rico. If the intent or motivation of the federal government to keep him in prison is to discourage people from fighting and sharing their ideals, then this repressive policy has been an operational and historical failure. President Obama has to hear the call from each town as the main political leaders of the three parties representing different preferences regarding the political status of Puerto Rico have all demanded the release of Oscar. To ignore this claim is also a violation of the right of self-determination of the people of Puerto Rico and a discredit to the human rights policies of the US in the eyes of the rest of the world. In the interests of their nation, President Obama should respond favorably to the release of Oscar López, thereby serving the cause of human rights of vast sectors of humanity and promoting a process of reconciliation among the people of Puerto Rico and the US, as the colonial oppression of one nation against another is an injustice.



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## ... The Brother

By Mercedes López



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*From that fearless and clever boy grew a great man, a great brother that has been incarcerated for 34 years.*

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I could write a book about him and not leave anything out. Since I am older, I have seen him grow up. At a very early age he was a child that was alert, extroverted, happy and overall free to follow his interests and put

Nevertheless, when we did reunite he didn't lose any of his youthful idiosyncrasies of being a loving, sociable, intelligent, playful, dancer (like a toy top) and overall the importance he placed on his studies.

From that fearless and clever boy grew a great man, a great brother that has been incarcerated for 34 years. His jailers have tried to use all their tricks against him to demoralize, physically and psychologically torture, isolate and erase him from all facets of the earth, yet they have not been successful. Oscar, that dear brother who has been transformed into a symbol of hope, love and well-being for all men and women who struggle for the freedom and sovereignty for our homeland.

them into practice. Perhaps that is one of his skills—to predict his future. My memory is quite clear, perhaps in some sublime way his life was predestined.

Then came our youth, our father separated him from our nuclear family which caused him much pain.

At this point in my life, my only priority is to give him a big hug outside of prison and share with him all of the good things that unite us.



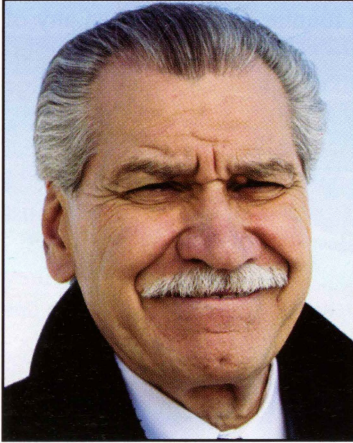
The López Family House with Oscar's Cousin Nilda Pérez López in San Sebastian



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## ... The Veteran

May 29, 2014 - Paul Roldán



**G**ood evening and welcome to all of you who are both observing and remembering Oscar López Rivera's 33 years in prison, but also celebrating his extraordinary life of personal commitment, courage and sacrifice.

Oscar is a unique Puerto Rican, and rarer human being. To paraphrase, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar sees things as they

are and has the courage to ask why, but he also has the wisdom to see things as they could be and ask why not. He has spent virtually half his life in prison steadfast to his dream of why not. Why not for our children, why not for our families, why not for our community, why not for Puerto Rico. In 1981, Oscar was convicted and sentenced to almost a life sentence in prison; not for murder, not for planting bombs, not for hurting anyone, but for seditious conspiracy, namely he was associated with an organization that sought to evolve Puerto Rico from a colony to a free and independent nation.

As Nobel Prize Laureate and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated "... López's only crime was conspiring to free his people from the shackles of imperial injustice."

There are some coincidental similarities between Oscar and me. We were both born in 1943, we both served in the Army Infantry in Vietnam. We both were awarded Bronze Stars for combat duty; we both have mustaches. But these superficialities are not what have drawn me to Oscar's cause. It is the more profound philosophies that he expressed in his writings of Love and Loyalty which we share. Like Oscar, I believe war is unnatural to the human condition. God did not create us to destroy each other for political, economic or religious reasons. Human life is much too precious to be squandered in military conflict.

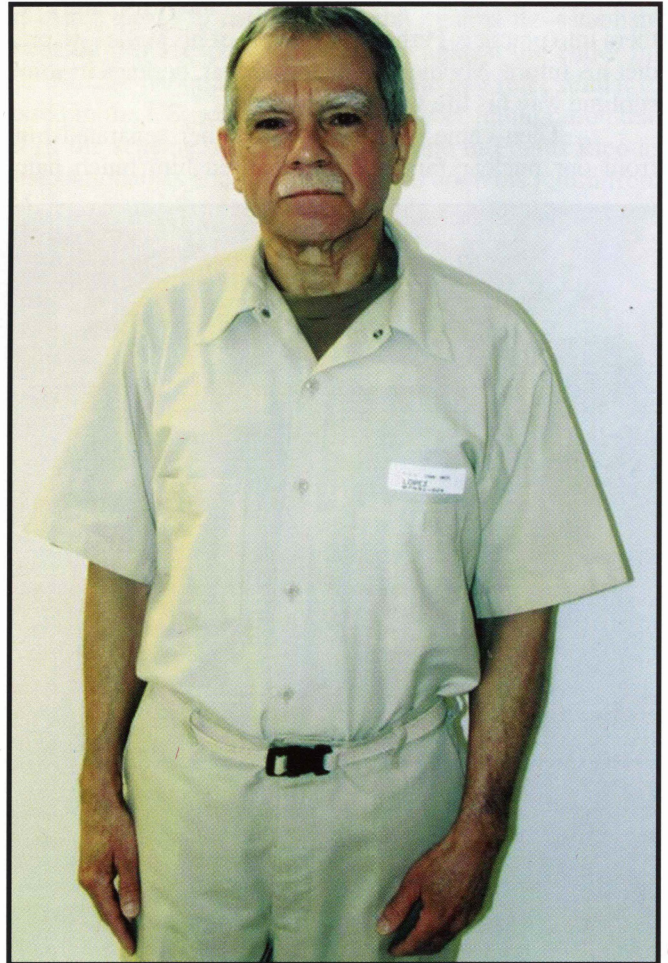
Oscar and I also share in the fundamental belief

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*To paraphrase, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar sees things as they are and has the courage to ask why, but he also has the wisdom to see things as they could be and ask why not.*

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that we leave no one behind. In Vietnam, on the field of battle, it was a primal moral principle – "leave no one behind," and it was this belief that led Oscar to reject President Clinton's offer to commute his sentence in 1999. He refused to desert his comrades who would remain in prison. To quote Oscar "...the idea of leaving them behind was intolerable. I could not leave anyone behind... not in the Vietnam War did I abandon a single comrade, much less would I have abandoned Carlos and Haydee. So therefore, it is now our turn today, and into the future, to continue the struggle to free Oscar and not leave him behind.



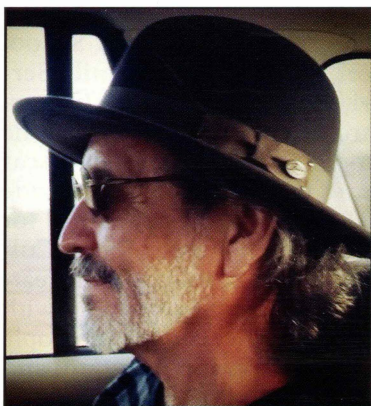
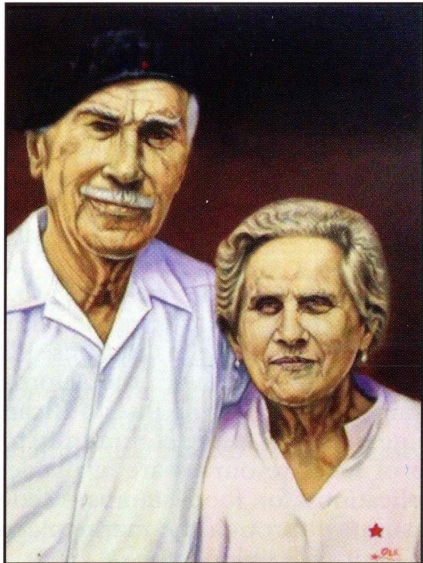


# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## ... The Painter

Elizam Escobar

*And in the case of Oscar, the power of art has joined with the power of a free consciousness, which grows in dignity, and stalks, every day, the false posture of an empire that claims to be the champion of human rights.*



The prisons in the United States are a place of obscenity. For us who have been in them due to reasons regarding our involvement in the struggle against colonialism and for the independence of Puerto Rico, the obscenity is two-

fold. Surveillance and punishment are doubled in size. We have today's ultimate example, in the case of our compañero Oscar López Rivera, he who has this vicious form of revenge operating against him from the empire that continues to oppress and exploit our nation. In this situation, Oscar has managed to train in the weaponry of art, developed a technical mastery of the formal elements of painting, and put it at the service of the resistance and liberation. This activity

manifests itself in a moment of anticipation of his release from prison through his artistic forms and images.

His paintings have crossed the bars and prison walls to reunite with his supporters and family, but also to contribute to the knowledge of who he is, his struggle and who those are who have established and built this struggle up to now. His art is another offering that he selflessly gives to our fight, and a tribute to Puerto Rican and Latin American patriotism. Oscar's image has also increased throughout Puerto Rico as an omen of his speedy return to his homeland. And it is in Puerto Rico, the cultural struggle, through all its manifestations, that keeps the political struggle alive.

And in the case of Oscar, the power of art has joined with the power of a free consciousness, which grows in dignity, and stalks, every day, the false posture of an empire that claims to be the champion of human rights.



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## ... The Legacy

By Jan Susler

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*All agreed that Oscar's visionary community organizing left an inspiring legacy which has been key in maintaining Puerto Rican identity in Chicago and in empowering Puerto Ricans to create solutions working together.*

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Former political prisoners Edwin Cortés, Ricardo Jiménez and Luis Rosa got together recently to reflect on the role Oscar López Rivera played in developing institutions in the Chicago's Puerto Rican community to respond to the community's needs. Oscar, they agreed, was the epitome of holistic thinking when he returned from Vietnam in the late 1960's to find his community wracked by discrimination, poverty and lack of power. Anything that negatively affected the community – housing, education, the

drug infestation, employment – he sought to change.

And he aligned himself with people to equip them with the knowledge and tools to affect change. It was a period of, “we have a problem, we can't pretend to think that those who perpetuate the problem will fix it.” Oscar provided leadership and passion, with his holistic vision of how to save a community, how to envision its duration, long term. He helped to create institutions with deep roots in the community.

Decades later, the three former political prisoners say, the community continues to have the same needs, and they work in some of these institutions still thriving today. Edwin Cortés works with the Affordable Care Act Program, a project of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, doing outreach in the community to make people aware of what resources are available, and processing applications for food stamps, Medicaid and private insurance through the marketplace (Obamacare), based on individual income.

The Cultural Center, which Oscar helped to found, became home to many projects, including what is now the Pedro Albizu Campos High School [PACHS]. Luis Rosa works with Rincón Family Services, which partners with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, as project enrollment coordinator for the mental health department. Rincón, which Oscar helped to found, was one of the first clinics to provide methadone treatment. Ricardo Jiménez works for VIDA/SIDA, also a project of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, as manager of linkage to care and treatment for medical care and treatment of people with sexually transmitted infections, specializing in people who are HIV+; as manager of housing program; and as case manager for housing for homeless youth.

Next page...



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

Education became a focus of the conversation. In the 1970's, when Oscar, former political prisoner Carmen Valentín, and others, founded PACHS, the pushout/dropout rate in the Puerto Rican community was 70%. "Our needs weren't being met at the all white high school," remembered Ricardo. "The sense was that if we don't know our history, we don't know where we came from and can't see where we are going," remarked Edwin. The school started in a church basement, with five students. Now in its fourth home, having been gentrified out of its previous sites, PACHS is one of the best schools in the city. "Oscar, Carmen and the others understood the value and importance of an education for our community to survive," noted Luis.

At the same time they were founding PACHS, Oscar organized to insert Latinos into a higher education setting. In 1971, former Puerto Rican political prisoner Alberto Rodríguez, Edwin's brother Julio Cortés, and Juan Rivera were among the first Puerto Rican students to enroll at University of Illinois in Chicago, and there were only a handful of Mexicans. The Latin American Recruitment Program (LARP) became the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services (LARES) and the Rafael Cintrón Ortiz Cultural Center – still offering services today, which Oscar helped found – ensured a change in those numbers, so that now Latinos comprise 25% of the campus population.

"We haven't escaped colonialism, living in the U.S.," Edwin observed, but the efforts of Oscar and others since, "to create and maintain self-sustaining, independent community organizations can serve as a model for empowerment of communities and nations."

All agreed that Oscar's visionary community organizing left an inspiring legacy which has been key in maintaining Puerto Rican identity in Chicago and in empowering Puerto Ricans to create solutions working together.

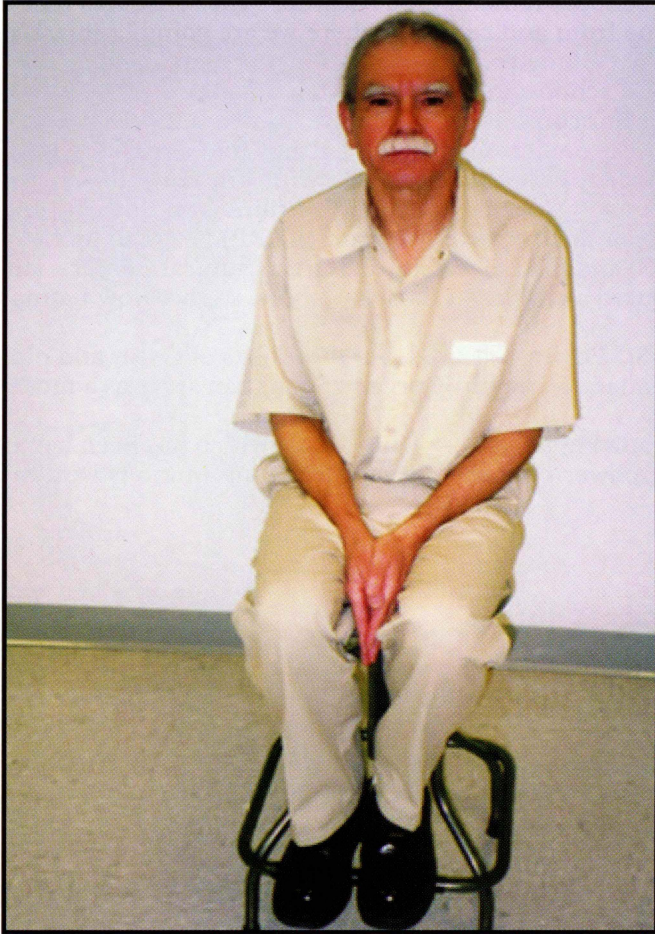




# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## A Message for the May 30<sup>th</sup> New York City March and Rally

By Oscar López Rivera



**W**hen I was arrested on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1981, I had no idea I was going to spend 34 years and counting in prison. What I knew and anticipated was that I was going to be facing very hard and difficult challenges that were going to require lots of inner strength, spiritual and mental fortitude and discipline if I were going to deal with and try to transcend them. I also knew I had to prepare and to start doing it from that moment on.

It didn't take me long to discover what the jailers had in store for me. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, 1981 I arrived at USP Leavenworth. The judge who had sentenced me ordered I be sent to a penitentiary with walls, and USP Leavenworth was it. For me the gulag was interesting because that was the same place from where Oscar Collazo López

and Irving Flores Rodriguez - two of our Five National Heroes - had been released 23 months earlier. And when I entered the prison it was like an epiphany because I could feel their strength and suddenly I felt I could do the same amount of time they had done without flinching. As soon as I arrived the jailers wasted no time in trying to intimidate me with their verbal abuses, their antics and bullying. They defined me as an incorrigible and notorious criminal and told me I didn't belong in their prison but in the control unit of USP Marion.

For the next 5 years the jailers, the FBI and their informers worked on a plan to set me up with a conspiracy to escape. They used every trick in the book to do it, including my medical condition in order taking me to the prison-hospital in Springfield, Mo., and keeping me there in a hermetically closed cell, without water and extremely hot for 22 days. But they had failed in their first attempt to put me in the middle of a conspiracy because of a mistake they made with the doctor, who ran the Leavenworth hospital.

Finally they added another informer who was experienced and in May 1986 they completed their conspiracy. I was sent to USP Marion like they had said they were going to do. For the next 12 years I was kept in Marion And ADX, being subjected to sensory deprivation regimen. I had no access to natural light, to fresh air and the water I consumed was contaminated with dioxin - a carcinogen. I had no contact visits, and only two 15 minutes phone calls per month. I couldn't touch my mother, my daughter, my granddaughter and my other visitors and all the conversations were monitored. And in ADX, I was awakened every half hour for 58 days. Had I not known how to use a breathing exercise to relax and get small siestas I would have been profoundly affected. I was fortunate that I only suffer a sleeping problem.

In 1998 I was transferred to Terre Haute. Arriving here gave me the great opportunity to spend time with Ricardo Jiménez, a compa I had not seen since April 4, 1980. It was a great experience being here with him until September 1999, when he and the other compas' were released. That day was the happiest I had experienced since they had been arrested.

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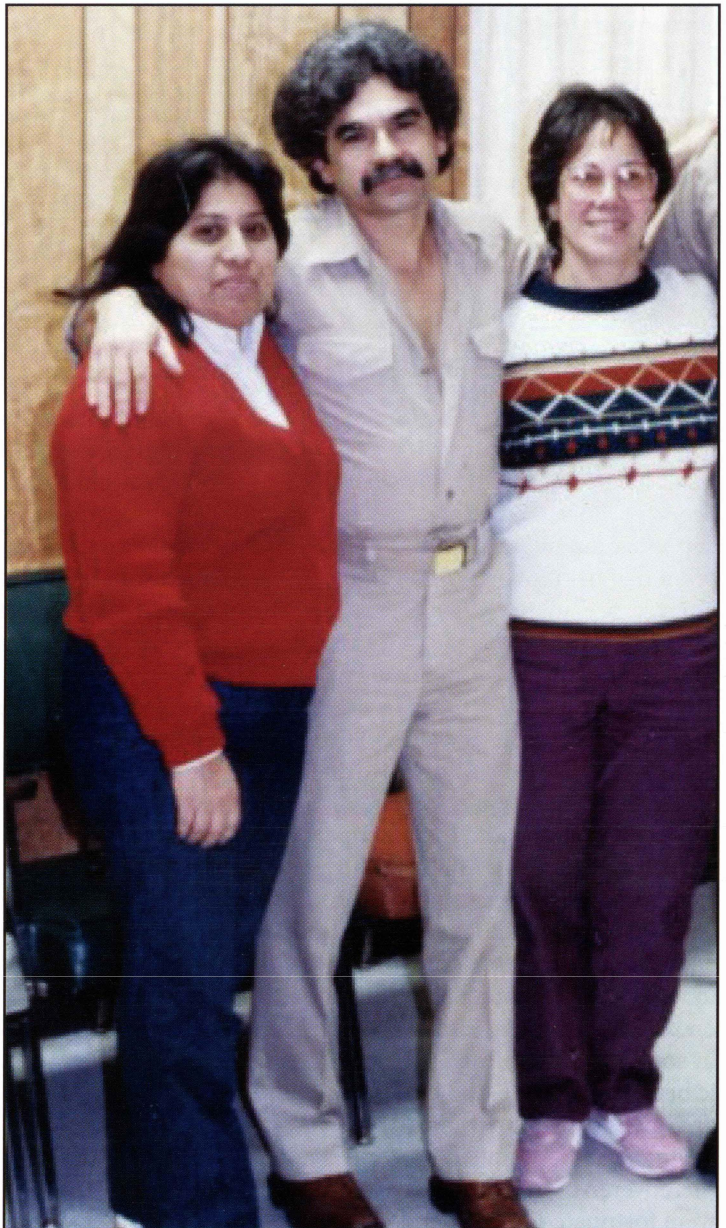
# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

One of the most heart wrenching experience for me has been the loss of loved ones. I lost my father, mother, and two brothers-in-law between 1981 and 1997. When my mother passed on I had to dig deep into my strength reservoir to transcend the pain and the challenge. And since 1998 i have lost many dear friends, great companeros(as) and my older sister. The way I dealt with the pain all these years has been by using the treasure that's the memory. That's why I refuse to forget.

The years I've spent in prison have allowed me to fully discover and appreciate the significance of solidarity, of family ties, the meaning of true companerismo, and the greatnest of the Puerto Rican heart. It's a heart full of love and compassion. I have learned to fill my heart with love and compassion every day in order to prevent it from being poisoned by hatred and fear. I have come to realize that there is only one race - the human one. I have learned to use my inner strength, my mental and spiritual fortitude and to discipline myself in order to face the challenges I have to deal with. I believe every problem created by man has a solution and that all it takes is for us to dare to find it. I believe a better and more just world is possible as long as we dare to struggle for it. I feel more certain today than i did 34 years ago that Puerto Rico can achieve its independence and become a free and sovereign nation. I believe in the power of the people and that they are the power. I believe we can generate a political discourse that's healthy, ethical, robust and that dignifies our people. I believe that we can transform Borinken Bella into an edenic garden for the enjoyment of the Puerto Rican people and of all humanity. And I can affirm that no matter what the future brings I can walk every day with my honor, dignity and courage intact and strong. Let's dare to struggle, let's dare to win.

EN RESISTENCIA Y LUCHA,  
OLR.

*The years I've spent in prison have allowed me to fully discover and appreciate the significance of solidarity, of family ties, the meaning of true companerismo, and the greatnest of the Puerto Rican heart. It's a heart full of love and compassion. I have learned to fill my heart with love and compassion every day in order to prevent it from being poisoned by hatred and fear.*









# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

*Let's unite and let's work together to make Puerto Rico the edenic garden of the Caribbean for the enjoyment of all Puerto Ricans and for all of humanity. Let's dare to unite, let's dare to struggle and let's dare to win.*

Most of the industry that was created between 1945 and 1970 left Puerto Rico and moved to other countries where the wages were cheaper and the government had given them more incentives than the ones they were getting in Puerto Rico. And most of the jobs they had promised to create in Puerto Rico were never created.

The third wave of forced emigration was the byproduct of the economic crisis Puerto Rico was facing, and of the government's debt that it couldn't pay. Since there were no jobs for young professionals with solid academic formations and professionals with work experience, their only option was to emigrate. For example, if the school of medicine in Puerto Rico graduated 100 doctors about 85 of them were being forced to emigrate.

This created the problem of brain drain, and the loss of most professionals between the ages of 25 and 45. But for the vultures of Wall St. and Washington, who had created the debt crisis, their solution was for the colonial administration to privatize the public services and to sell solid publicly-owned corporations like the Puerto Rican Telephone Co. and The Airport. Practically, everything that could have been privatized was privatized. But the debt and the economic crisis only grew worse. The impoverishment of Puerto Rico's middle- and working-class was accelerated. And the future of Puerto Rico only grew bleaker.

There are 3.5 million Puerto Ricans residing in Puerto Rico. They are much older than the Puerto Ricans who have emigrated. So not only Puerto Rico is suffering from the brain drain caused by the forced emigration but also by an aging population that gets poorer and poorer. And there are over 5 million in the diaspora. Together we are over 8 million strong. What we need most is for the diaspora and for Puerto Rico to unite and start working on a plan for the betterment of the future of Puerto Rico.

The diasporic boricua can make great contributions for the future of Puerto Rico right from the diaspora, because the advancement in technology makes it possible. For the diaspora, a strong Puerto Rico fortifies its cultural and national identity needs and gives it hope of the return to the homeland. And for Puerto Rico the colonial status can be resolved. We are a strong people, courageous, creative, compassionate and with a heart full of love for freedom and justice. We can create a strong Puerto Rican nation, independent and sovereign, a homeland for all Puerto Ricans. Let's unite and let's work together to make Puerto Rico the edenic garden of the Caribbean for the enjoyment of all Puerto Ricans and for all of humanity. Let's dare to unite, let's dare to struggle and let's dare to win.



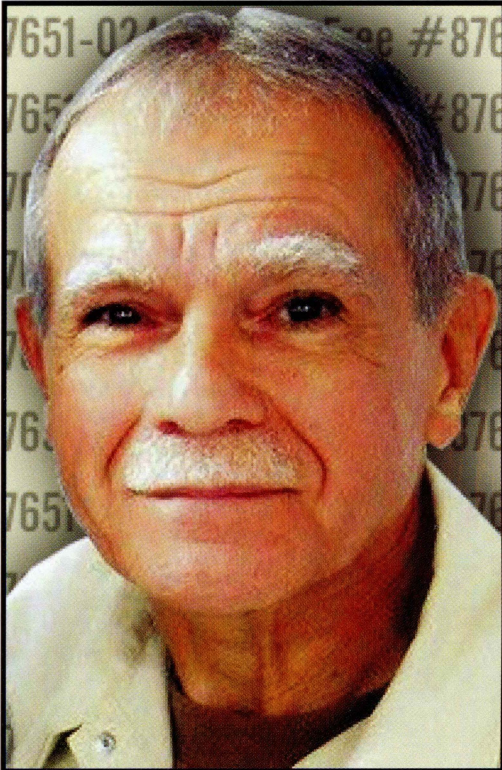
EN RESISTENCIA Y LUCHA,  
OLR.



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS SEEKS RELEASE OF OSCAR LÓPEZ Group that unites Hispanic Democrats sent a letter to President Obama

By José A. Delgado



**W**ASHINGTON - The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), as a group, has given its support to the release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, who next week will have served 34 years in U.S. prisons.

In an act that increases the voice that Puerto Rican Democratic members of Congress have had, the president of the CHC, Linda Sánchez (California), this week sent a letter to president Barack Obama, with a copy to Attorney General Loretta Lynch, in favor of commuting López Rivera's sentence.

"The Congressional Hispanic Caucus respectfully urges you to exercise your constitutional power to commute the sentence of Oscar López Rivera and to grant his immediate release from prison. This request is consistent with our mission to advance issues that are important to the Hispanic community," Congresswoman Sánchez stated in the letter.

El Nuevo Día obtained a copy of the letter yesterday. A source advised that all 26 members of the CHC weren't necessarily in support.

The 26 members of the CHC include the resident commissioner, Pedro Pierluisi, and Puerto Rican members of Congress José Serrano (New York), Nydia Velázquez (New York) and Luis Gutiérrez (Illinois). The only Hispanic Democrat in the Senate, Robert Menéndez (New Jersey), also belongs to the CHC. In the May 20 letter, Sánchez – whose sister Loretta, also a member of Congress, is now a candidate for the Senate in California – pointed out that

López Rivera is a decorated Vietnam veteran who was not convicted of killing or harming anyone.

López Rivera, 72 years old, has been in prison since May 29, 1981, after being convicted of seditious conspiracy for his ties to the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). His clemency petition to Obama has been pending since 2011, since in 1999 he declined an offer of clemency that did not include two of his compañeros.

The leader of the CHC recalled that López Rivera's co-defendants who accepted the 1999 clemency offer are now productive and law-abiding citizens. An advisor to the CHC stated that there is a conviction that López-Rivera "has paid his debt to society after 34 years in prison."

Congresswoman Sánchez highlighted that many people support the clemency petition, including Nobel Laureates and institutions, the Puerto Rican Democrats in Congress, governor Alejandro García Padilla, former governors, and the Puerto Rican Legislature. "Like them," Sánchez underlined, "the Congressional Hispanic Caucus believes it is time for Oscar to come home."



# SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO OSCAR LÓPEZ

## - Editorial: El Nuevo Dia President Obama's human and moral challenge

Translated by Jan Susler

**O**n Friday, May 29, Oscar López Rivera, decorated in the Vietnam War, the longest held political prisoner on the planet, will have served 34 years imprisoned in U.S. prisons, which means that the time has come for the calls for his release to travel to Washington, and be strongly heard where they need to be heard as a moral demand for human rights, justice and real exercise of democracy.

With good reason, an important part of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus this week sent a letter to President Obama, with a copy to Attorney General Loretta Lynch, asking him to immediately commute Oscar's sentence, because if the president doesn't intervene, he will remain in prison until 2023. By then, Oscar, who is currently 72 years old, will be 80.

For a long time the people of Puerto Rico have called for his freedom, but with greater emphasis after May of 2013 when a mass symbolic imprisonment was held, unleashing marches and petitions so that this Puerto Rican, native of San Sebastián, could return home.

These calls haven't been effective in the highest political circles in Washington, not even the calls from governor Alejandro García Padilla, who visited Oscar López in September of 2014; not the requests of ex-governors, Latin American heads of state, religious groups, professional associations and political parties of every ideology. The disdain shown, ignoring the desire of the majority of Puerto Ricans, that Oscar may live the rest of his days in the warmth of his people and the love of his family, contrasts with efforts, moves and reproaches the United States directs at other countries who also hold political prisoners in their prisons.

No other prisoner for reason of conscience, in no other region, has served 34 years in prison. Not even Nelson Mandela, who suffered prison for 27 years (seven less than Oscar), and whose cell president Obama visited with amazement and absorption, as if his decision to continue the imprisonment of Oscar López didn't weigh on his conscience; Oscar who, the same as Mandela, was accused of "seditious conspiracy," and who did not kill or harm anyone.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus rightly reminded Obama that the contempt for the life of a man in his seventies who has maintained an irreproachable posture, who has shown examples of maturity and serenity through his public expressions, and whose freedom represents no risk to society, much less to the most powerful nation on the planet, is a disgrace for his government. Democracy cannot use its criminal justice system to confirm political discrimination or to prolong vengeance; and that obstinacy in not granting clemency to Oscar has vengeful and discriminatory nuances.

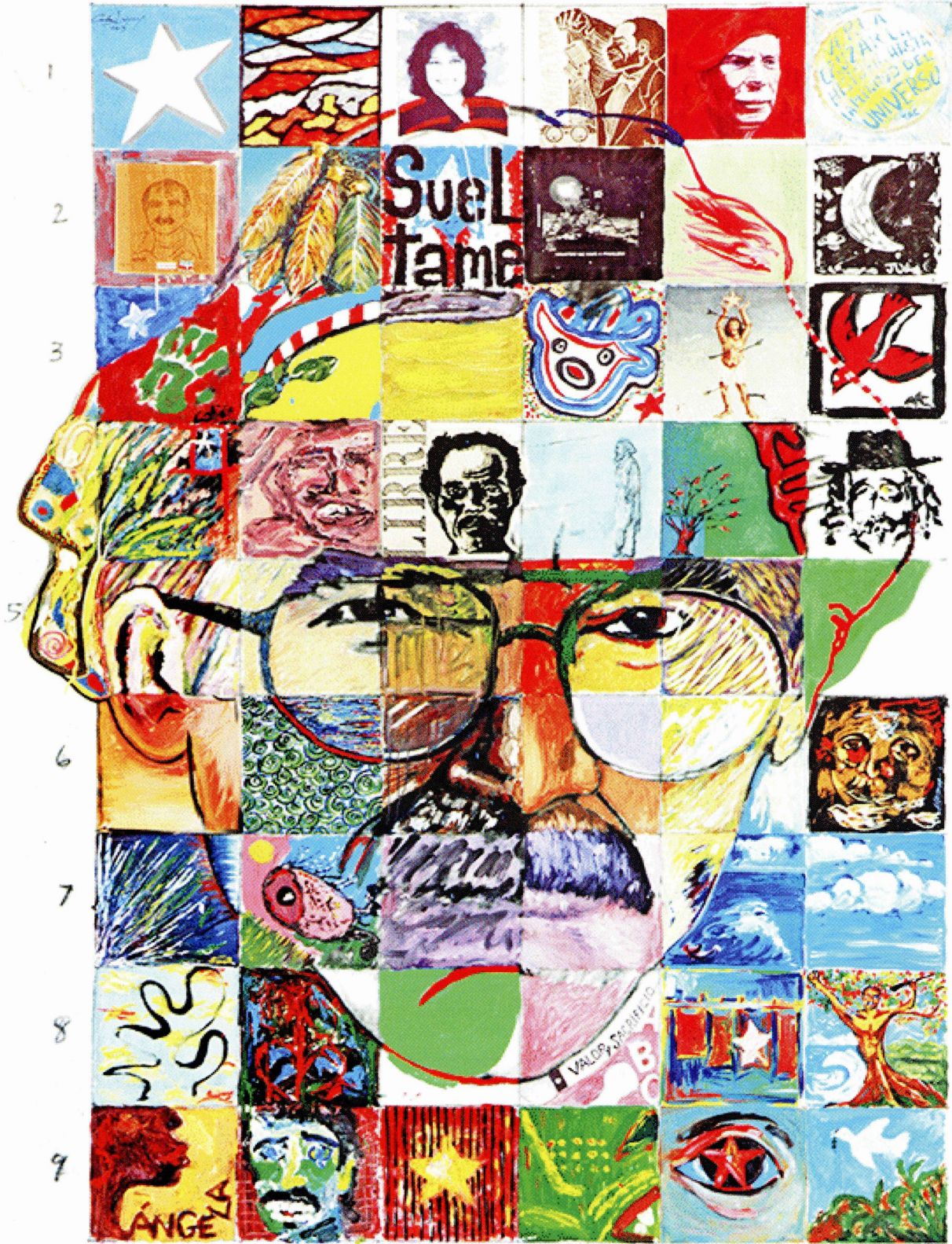
In Puerto Rico, efforts are still being made so that Oscar López can be freed before his health fails. Hundreds of thousands of citizens throughout the Country have contributed time, resources, determination and solidarity to his cause. This campaign, promoted by several organizations and in which dozens of prestigious institutions participate, has had international repercussions, but the White House has maintained a position of insensitivity, incompatible, as we have already pointed out, with its international campaigns for human rights.

The cruelty of continuing for 34 years the imprisonment of a human being who has demonstrated his moral caliber and integrity leaves in a compromised position those who, being able to rise above meanness, treat Oscar so cruelly. There is thus no other remedy but to keep internationalizing the demand and take to Washington, to the White House, and to President Obama's attention, the message that he is not being truthful when he intervenes on behalf of other prisoners of conscience, leaving ours to languish in prison in Terre Haute.

Mr. President, show your humanitarian calling and order his release now.



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**34 AÑOS PRESO POR LA LIBERTAD**