



Oscar with daughter Clarisa at the Federal Corrections Institute, Terre Haute, IN

WHO IS OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA?

Why should he be released after 34 Years in Prison?

Oscar was born in the small town of San Sebastian, Puerto Rico, moved to Chicago in 1957 (at age 14), and rumor has it was becoming a fine dancer. He was drafted and sent to Vietnam, where, like so many of his generation, he began to see that he had more in common with the Vietnamese who were fighting for their freedom than with some of his colleagues in the US Armed Forces; nevertheless, he was released with an honorable discharge after earning a Bronze Star for his courage and valor. Upon returning to Chicago, he became intensely involved in community-based improvement work throughout his largely Puerto Rican neighborhood, helping to establish a high school, day care center, and cultural center, and supporting student activists and others.

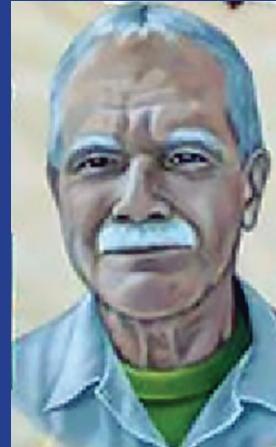
But the Puerto Rican movement did not start in the late 1960s:

The 117-year history of Puerto Rican-US relations is a history of struggle against colonialism.

And it goes back even further....

As early as 1511, just eighteen years after Christopher Columbus first landed on the island, the indigenous Taino inhabitants rose up in revolt against the Spanish-speaking settlers. Later (after the Taino people had been all but wiped out, worked to death as slaves), the settlers themselves began a long campaign against continued rule by Spanish authorities. Then, when control of the island was ceded to the USA in 1900 as a result of the Spanish-American war (after two years of direct control by the US Marines), the struggle was transformed into one directed against the new occupying power—which used all of the classical and oppressive tools of colonial administration:

- Imposition of English as the language of instruction in schools, courts, and all manner of official business;
- Prohibition against any display of the Puerto Rican flag, even in private homes;
- Take-over of vast portions of Puerto Rican territory (including some of the best



agricultural land) for US military bases and bombing ranges;

- Political disenfranchisement, such that Puerto Ricans living on the island could be drafted into the US Armed Forces but not allowed to vote for governmental representatives or President;
- Economic restructuring, which made North American corporate interests top priority.

At one point, racist population-control measures resulted in the sterilization of 40 percent of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age.

A strong independence movement, including armed resistance, has been an active part of Puerto Rican life. The response to this was typical of an occupying power: repression and criminalization of anything which appeared to oppose US control. Thousands have been arrested and imprisoned over the years; beloved Nationalist leader Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos died in 1965 after years of being tortured in prison.

Oscar López Rivera was convicted in 1981 of the thought crime of “seditious conspiracy”—the same charge that has often been used against Puerto Rican anti-colonialists. The disproportionately long and harsh sentence he received, and often torturous conditions of isolation he has faced, are typical of treatment of US political prisoners. Though rumors continue to fly that he was responsible for bombings and death, Oscar was never even charged with engaging in any acts that were directed against human lives. And though armed action to overthrow an occupying power is a long-standing self-determination right recognized by the United Nations and international law, Oscar and his co-defendants have – since 1997 – renounced violence while maintaining their basic anti-colonial principles.



Not only pro-independence activists in Puerto Rico, however, believe that the island remains a colony; Those who would like to see Puerto Rico become the 51st US state, and those who favor the status quo “free associated state” commonwealth status also call out for a clear resolution of the fate of the island – a call taken up by the United Nations Committee on Decolonization.

And not only pro-independence activists support the growing movement to free Oscar López Rivera. From the Catholic Archbishop of San Juan to statehood and commonwealth elected officials throughout the island, from a dozen international Nobel Peace Prize recipients led by South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu to US Congressional leaders, union activists, and grassroots community groups – the call to release Oscar

López Rivera has reached unprecedented levels. At the last summit meeting of the Organization of American States, three Latin American Presidents joined together to proclaim Oscar “the Nelson Mandela of Latin America” – the longest held political prisoner in the history of US-Latin American relations.

All of Oscar López Rivera’s 1981 codefendants have since been released from prison, granted clemency by President Clinton in 1999; all have reintegrated into the social and cultural life of their communities, living productive, nonviolent, and positive lives. After 34 years behind bars, it is time to bring this grandfather, this Vietnam veteran, this community leader home. After a prison visit last October (2014), the Governor of Puerto Rico said “Oscar López owes no debt to society, and if he ever did, he paid it a long time ago.”

This mass movement – which crosses all manner of political, socio-economic, religious, ideological, status-option, cultural, and ethnic lines – has an historic opportunity to win an actual victory and successfully pressure President Barack Obama to grant clemency as Clinton and President Carter did to past Puerto Rican political prisoners.

We can, however, ONLY DO IT WITH YOU!

Whether you sign a petition, make a phone call, attend the huge NYC demonstration on May 30, 2015 and future demonstrations or political actions, read more about and by Oscar, make a financial contribution to the cause, tell a friend or neighbor about Oscar – OR DO ALL OF THE ABOVE AND MORE – we need ALL PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE to take action and make a commitment NOW!

We must speak with ONE VOICE FOR OSCAR:

It is time to FREE OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA! 34 YEARS IS LONG ENOUGH! IT IS TIME TO BRING HIM HOME!

For more information visit <http://boricuahumanrights.org> and <http://freeoscarncymay30.org>



Produced by members of Resistance in Brooklyn and the Old & New Collective (Carlito Rovira, artist) for Left Forum 2015 and beyond.