

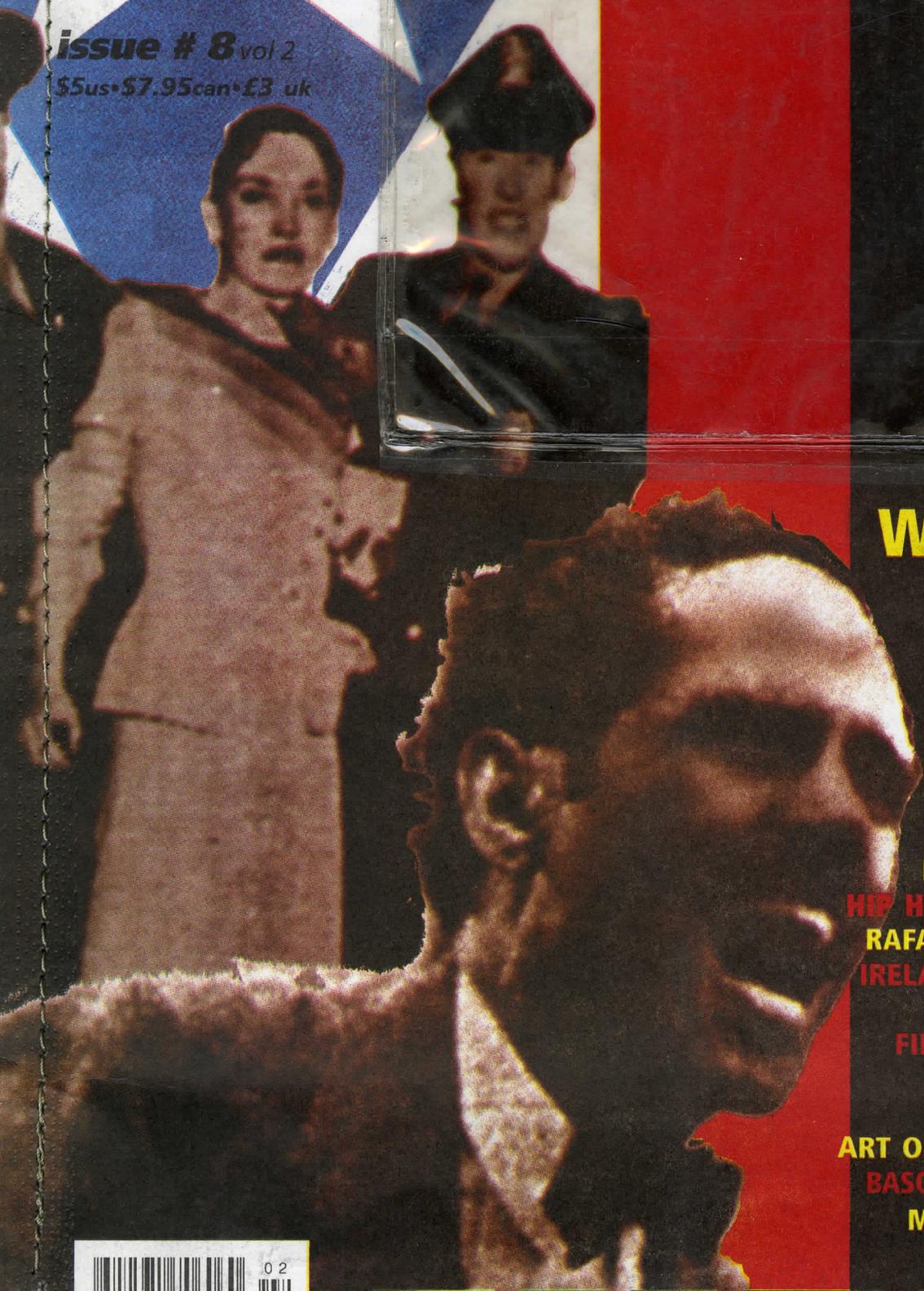
DEAD PREZ • TONY TOUCH • OZOMATLI • WILLIE COLON

VIEQUES: ECOLOGY  
UNDER  
SIEGE

**BLU**  
TM

issue # 8 vol 2

\$5us • \$7.95can • £3 uk



PUERTO RICAN  
**WOMEN  
WARRIORS**

**ALBIZU**

**LATINAS  
& HIP HOP**

COPS DIS BIG PUN  
ROCK STEADY CREW  
HIP HOP IN PUERTO RICO  
RAFAEL CANCEL MIRANDA  
IRELAND & PUERTO RICO  
BROWN BERETS  
FILIPINOS FIGHT BACK  
DREAM, R.I.P.  
H. RAP BROWN  
ART OF BLACK LIBERATION  
BASQUES OCCUPY LONDON  
MUMIA ON SANTANA



dead prez tony touch willie colon ozomatli ricanstruction

# letter from the editors

Greetings BLU fam

Bombs in Vieques have been on everyone's radar over the past few months. The oppression and resistance there are part of a tradition that goes back many years – in case you didn't recognize the striking woman being arrested on the cover, she's Lolita Lebron, one of the many valiant women of the Puerto Rico liberation struggle, and she's still on the front lines (see the pull-out poster). The other figure is Pedro Albizu Campos, who is to the Puerto Rican movement what Malcolm X is to Black Liberation. One way to start educating yourself on this struggle is to read the words of another great independentista, Rafael Cancel Miranda, on page 18.

No issue is an island – in addition to disrupting people's lives, the presence of the u.s. military in Vieques has devastating effects on the environment (check page 52). This same imperialist disregard for Earth and her people takes the form of unnecessary development in the Philippines (page 45) and Basque country (page 53), and the people of these countries aren't taking it lying down. While we're talking about fighting oppression, check page 42 where dead prez break it down on revolutionary love, label problems, Vieques, and H. Rap Brown. You can read the unedited version of this (and other) interviews online at [www.blumagazine.net](http://www.blumagazine.net).

As always, this issue has controversial material. We don't expect everybody to agree with everything they see in BLU – we certainly don't – but we do ask that you stretch your mind to understand the struggles and perspectives of people with different strategies than yours – even though (as Christoph Arnold puts it on page 48) we may be soldiering in different trenches.

This issue is a long time dream of our Ed-in-Chief, who's been schooling us on his people's struggle since before BLU's first issue, so the rest of the staff are dedicating BLU:8 to him and his wife. Special thanks to the Rican Revolution special editors and contributors who helped make it happen.

*Siempre Pa'lante*

The Editors



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NOT4PROPHET *guidance*

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roi kwabena (trinidad)  
shaka shakur (n.y.c.)  
shante bullock (d.c./v.a.)  
suemyra shah (bay area)  
yaya porras (sacramento)

## BLU SHOUTING OUT

Russell: big ups extra love to Julio the Nuyorican Poets door man, love to the Nuyorican and everybody there • shouting out Bobby Sanabria the Latin jazz legend • much love and respect to Willie Colon • thanks and love to Nancy Rodriguez • big shoutout from the whole BLU music staff to Carlos Santana • Special shoutout to Willie Perdomo a true Nuyorican griot • Props to my homie Vagabond who put together the CD on this issue • Big up to G-Bo the Pro ... show support y'all and pick up G-BO's mixtapes! • Much love to all the squad at El Puente. Father Barrios for working to free minds/souls and bodies • Rah and all PRPPS ... Libertad Ya! • A special shoutout to all my peoples in SCI Greene • Going out also to all the heads in Comstock, word up • Big up to my homeboy Rocky putting together dope shows at the Nuyorican: ALL THAT (1st Wed of each month) and WORDS (3rd Sat of each month), be there! • Mad love to Bujú Banton • Extra respect to the legend Max Roach • Shouting out the Last Poets • Congrats on the album to Common, & props for putting out Assata's story • All the group Spearhead, big ups • C Rayz Walz spitting fire! • Big shoutout to Abu • Danny Hoch • Blood of Abraham • my homie and comrade Kamel Jacot-Bell • extra size props to Davey D, thanks for all your work, y'all better check out the site WWW.DAVEYD.COM • big up to Weyland Southon putting out art&truth over the airwaves at KPFA • Dwayne Wiggins... much love • Rhonda Hall from Temple U. radio • Special love going out to Owen Lamb • Shouting out Kofi Taha • MeShell Ndegeocello, mad respect • Bad Brains keeping it true and creative • Nile Rodgers still on the frontlines • D'Lo • mad love to Bahamadia • supesize big up to Gang Starr, peace&respect • M Ace & Skinny Man • shouting out Eclipse holding it up at Fat Beats • all the crew at Lyricist Lounge, worldwide y'all • Shouting out the whole F.E.D.S. squad • All the staff at Rawkus • Tom and Zach from Rage, big props for supporting the Zapatista sisters and brothers • Tribute to Curtis Mayfield whose music revolutionized and defined the movement.

Pete M: big shoutout to X-Man of La Junta and the whole Chicago 7 squad at [www.chicagohiphop.com](http://www.chicagohiphop.com) • Shirley Rodriguez & Edgardo Miranda... Stop the Bombs 2000, US out of Vieques! • Rachel LaForest and all the soldiers at Hunter SLAM • Tony Toca the Taino Turntable Terrorist, special shoutout • Greg Noce from Raptivism and No More Prisons people everywhere • big up to Zulu King Isa, building in Texas • Crazy Legs and the entire Rock Steady Crew... see you at the Rock Steady Anniversary 2000, June 27-29 • shouting out Danny Castro and Lyricist Lounge • to Marian Soledad and BLU's favorite PR roots reggae group CULTURA PROFETICA • love and respect to the Flow Master Piri Thomas, check out his hot site [www.cheverote.com](http://www.cheverote.com) • Rico Pabon and Prophets of Rage • Mumia, extra thanks for sharing your knowledge & vision • Martin Perna and Antibalas moving bodies and opening minds • big up to Jeremy Glick • to Kathryn Farr from URB • Andre English & Asia from Panther Collective, spreading the word nationwide • much love to Fred Ho, go educate yourself and buy Fred's new book LEGACY TO LIBERATION • John Massey a true street soldier • El Hajj Mauri Saalakan ... Free Jamil Al-Amin! • Rise and Shine • a shoutout to Ozzie Jones aka OLD MAN from NAME • Refa1 and propropaganda.com • master bluesman and true artist Corey Harris • Ian MacKaye from Fugazi for blazing a trail • Queen Godis • Karyl Walker, watch out for his articles coming to you in BLU • Pablo Herrera holding it up in Cuba • big up to Pablo Caraballo and his bro Juan Carlo • Russell "Maroon" Shoatz showing all revolutionaries what it means to lead by example • Todd Hyung Rae Tarselli, a lotta continua • and last but not least Vagabond and Not4Prophet for all the creativity and love as BLU8 struggled through it birth pains.

Priscilla: to all the Puerto Rican strong sisters, a tribute to your courage and beauty. You are an example of true strength. The 6 PR political prisoners who are still behind bars, stay strong. re ayala for opening minds and hearts; jr thanks for being born. In solidarity.

Pete W: Naj Grant, Prince Hakim El-Din, Ameerjill, Trina Franklin, Metaphorx, T-Carve, Duff, Aadverse, Colin Atrophy, Anthony Bansfield, Motion, Jenifer Patterson, our Canadian Crew, Joey Gonzalez, Hodari and Shante, Hyung Rae, Maroon

Isaac: much love Frank Cuen • shoutouts to Tony Touch, Crazy Legs and the whole Rock Steady Crew, Filthee, Second Staté, and Poet. Jared Kenny, Illadelph and the Mountain Brothers. Ian and Fugazi, the Cradleboard Foundation and jay L. much love.

## coming soon to BLU

BLU 9 BLACK AUGUST,  
CONSCIOUS HIP HOP &  
CUBA

## corrections for BLU 7

- Sis, Zenobia Obefemi's affiliation was incorrectly listed on p 48; she is with the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.
- Medusa's label is Feline Science; p8.
- Ham Di'ya Mu's organization is Ochosí's Way; p41
- in this issue: the photos of Ozomatli on the centerfold are incorrectly attributed; they were taken by Yaya and Dominick Porras.

BLU is a not-for-profit magazine where nobody's getting paid.

That's right, all the BLU editors, artists and writers are in it just for the love. Check it: How much green do you think it takes to create, manufacture and ship this kick-a\$\$, almost-ad-free mag and CD? (Hint: More than the 5 bills you paid for it.) So show your support by BUYING our artists' CDs and SUBSCRIBING to the magazine. Peace.



photograph michael abramson

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 technicolor**

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magazine

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THE GRAVE  
OF APATHY**

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movement committed to communal  
living, non-violence, and justice.

# love (amor y odio) and LOATHING

letters from our readers

uhuru

I went to the second annual BLACK AUGUST show awhile back and that's the first time I heard about BLU magazine. Why don't ya call it the BLU BIBLE ! I enjoyed it very much. I don't know exactly what issue I got but it has BOB MARLEY on the front cover. The CD is proper, everyone asks me where I got it from. From DEAD PREZ to GOLDIELOCKS to the children in the choir who sang "Bring us the Faith" in Spanish.

My mother was telling me to lend her the cd and she don't even speak english.

peace

oscar sanchez  
nyc

Greetings BLU and all progressive life. BLU has uplifted our spirits in Brooklyn. We all out there trying to get out the positivity, creativity and political activity. I'm working on it from all different levels. I work on New Media with La Lutta New Media Collective [www.lalutta.org](http://www.lalutta.org), Public Policy with The Global Other [www.theglobalother.org](http://www.theglobalother.org) and with housing rights at Community Training and Resource Center. Hit me up on any of these issues. We have to build together. WordLife

Kevin  
Brooklyn NY

Greetings. We've been following your developments. It looks to us like you've traded in your roots for Karl Marx! A piece of unasked for advice: put away your liberation theology books. It's not enough to switch from Right-Wing Babylon to Left-Wing Babylon. Take care lest you spiral clean out of Christianity!

SHALOM.  
Michael Wark  
Salem OR

Over the past few months I have had the pleasure of learning about your magazine and about the many organizations and artists that support. I have been telling everyone i know about the work you do and try to inform people about the causes you are fighting for. The diversity and broadness I see and is very refreshing and beautiful. I hope that none of you lose the purity of heart in your fight for justice. Keep up the struggle...Anything worth having is always worth fighting for...and we must have freedom and justice NOW!!!

Tasha Johnson  
Nashville TN

Your magazine is one of the most comprehensive magazines I've seen in a long time. By comprehensive, I mean that your magazine focuses on healing and the progression of the human being, not JUST hip hop, not JUST the on-going struggle for civil rights, but BLU represents a state of consciousness that we should all strive towards; a state of being that helps to improve the quality of life for every human being. Thank you all for representing what all of us could and should be doing. Respect,

Ben Fasman  
Pomona CA

Dear BLU Magazine,

I am writing you all to express my deep feelings of appreciation. The BLU crew is doing an excellent job...please don't sell your soul or your vision. After reading your magazine I have a few suggestions that may help your magazine in the future.

- Since your magazine is DOPE, you might want to employ some serious translators who are hip hoppers as well. The major languages on this planet are Kiswahile, French, Spanish, English, Mandarin, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic. I'm sure you know it is the technique that accomplishes the movement. For the first time in a very, very long time, people on earth regardless of where they are from are vibing to the same frequency...nahmeen. Hip hop is an extremely powerful medium.

- I also suggest having A FEW more pages of artwork that speaks to the conscious, unconscious, futuristik, and ancient...

- Whateva you do, do not go glossy. The recycled paper means a lot to tha tru environmentalists, and for others. You'd be surprised how just a simple "feel" of a magazine can encapsulate the tone. Recycled paper is good. Glossy paper is bad.

- Please. Keep the writing intelligent. I didn't like or appreciate your musik interview section. The questions were stupid. Make these artists think. Ask them serious questions about earth, humanity, the galaxy, the past, present and the future.

- Do you plan on discussing the topics of deforestation and genetik manipulation (i.e cloning and genetically manufactured foods?)

- The musik is excellent...please I beg you, do not water it down when you become a world famous magazine... I kan honestly say I am surprised at how good the musik is. The selection, the quality, the message, everything...I mean what planet did ya'll come from...

I wish you all the best of futures. Now I will leave you with a saying that my Grandmother used to say, May God Rest Her Soul. "DO NOT THINK OF TODAY, THINK OF FORTY YEARS FROM NOW."

Thank You for Your time  
PEACE,

TERA-13  
Boston MA

hey BLU what's up!  
fucking excellent mag/cd

I picked up 2 issues at the anarchist bookstore in SF. Really cool. Keep up the great work as this mag really is the shit I've been dreaming about and it's come true.

Much respect and love to BLU.

Slo-Mo.  
Entartete Kunst  
San Fran CA

peace out BLU!

your Women in Struggle issue is every bit of all that, especially the CD...Queen Godis's track is SO amazing. I want to know when you're going to address issues like the AIDS conspiracy and vaccines.

Jared Gordon  
Charlottesville NC

[www.blumagazine.net](http://www.blumagazine.net)

# bullets & clips

## key martin r.i.p.

Key Martin of the People's Video Network died March 18<sup>th</sup> at the age of 57. Key has been on the front lines doing work since the early 60s. In spite of severe asthma and health problems, he continued to go into dangerous situations. At the WTO protest in Seattle, he was shot with rubber bullets and pepper sprayed. He later developed blood clots in the lungs and legs and died of complications due to these blood clots. BLU is very grateful to Key for all the work that he has done for the struggle. There is a full memorial on the PVN web site, [www.peoplesvideo.org](http://www.peoplesvideo.org). The memorial gives a brief history of Key's activism over the years as well as his history with People's Video Network.

## barrios unidos

"We came back from one war to a war that was starting on the streets here," says Daniel "Nane" Alejandre of his return from Vietnam to California, where gang violence was conquering neighborhoods. His counter-attack was Barrios Unidos, organized to confront youth violence with a system of community organizing and the belief that young people have the potential to lead a social movement. From its first headquarters in Nane's 64 Chevy in the early 80s, Barrios Unidos has become an influential organization with thirteen chapters in the West and Mid-West and an economic development project, BU Productions, which last year grossed \$180,000. Central to Barrios Unidos' work is the six point Cesar Chavez Peace Plan, which calls for a progression from a strong base of community support to the development of public policies to create alternatives to incarceration, youth violence, and police brutality and the organization and mobilization of a youth-centered network.

Barrios Unidos • 313 Front Street • Santa Cruz, CA 95060.  
tel: 831.457.8208 • email: [barrios@cruzio.com](mailto:barrios@cruzio.com)

## mexico city

From April 20, 1999 to February 7, 2000, University of Mexico students went on strike and shut down the campus. The strike was started over a tuition hike from 0020 to \$140 per year, making education too expensive for many of the students. Mexico is a nation of 98 million people where 40 million live in poverty and 26 million in extreme poverty. Strikers gained support from middle class Mexicans who have yet to see a standard of living increase after three years of "free trade". Police broke the strike on February 7 by storming the campus in riot gear. President Zedillo, remembering for once that the international press generally frowns on massacres of civilians, forbade the police to use guns.

## justice in claremont

by ben fasman

In January, 1999, Irvin Landrum Jr., a young African American male, was killed by two (2) Claremont police officers during a routine traffic stop. The facts in the case raised a great deal of suspicion about the guilt of the officers in the shooting (for example, the gun that the officers claim Irvin shot at them was never fired, and had been wiped clean of all fingerprints, according to a ballistics report). The rest of the details of this case are frightening and display a gross system of racial profiling, police cover-ups, and a city government that condones all of this behavior.

**WE WANT JUSTICE IN CLAREMONT!** For all the details involving this case, please see the following website:  
<http://bernard.pitzer.edu/~hfairchi/Landrum/index.html>  
Or you can contact us by phone (toll free voice/fax) at 877.698.3790, by email at [JUSTICE4IRVIN@ureach.com](mailto:JUSTICE4IRVIN@ureach.com), or through the mail at: Irvin Landrum Jr. Justice Organizing Committee • PO Box 3282 • Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91729

## asian dub foundation

Since their formation in 1993, Asian Dub Foundation have been making politically and socially conscious sounds. Formed in London's East End by a group of teachers and students from a community music education center, ADF's explosive mix of melodic rap, drum'n bass, jungle and punk fused with classic Indian sounds has been called 'the most exiting new music in Britain.' But their fans don't just love their music, they also respect the political and cultural messages that ADF put across. It's about responsibility to music, to Britain's Asian communities, to education and to themselves. Earning a reputation as out-standing live performers, ADF recently opened for Rage Against the Machine in Europe. Dr. Das, ADF bassist, told us a little about the tour.

"On a personal level, the members of Rage are really great people. What they are doing collectively and individually in terms of engaging in political struggles – most notably to free Mumia – is really great. That is one of the reasons we accepted their invitation. We have always played completely different venues – whether it is dance clubs, Asian venues, Rock and Metal festivals, even Christian festivals. We're always up to the challenge of meeting new people, because there is absolutely no point, if you have got anything to say, in preaching to the converted. If possible, you have got to reach new people. The RAGE tour was an interesting experience for us."

ADF continues touring Europe until May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

Visit their website at [www.asiandubfoundation.com](http://www.asiandubfoundation.com) for gig dates.

ADFED (ADF Education) is the fledgling educational wing of Asian Dub Foundation and is an extension of the spirit of ADF. It was borne out of their experience as a developing music collective and their realisation that there are a lack of structures and role models for young, particularly Asian, bands and musicians who are trying to make headway in an industry in which they are grossly under-represented both as performers and technicians.

For more information about ADFED contact Lisa Das at:

ADFED • PO BOX 23139 • LONDON SE1 1ZU • tel: 0207.407. 1728 •

fax: 0207.407. 4855 • e-mail: [adf@easynet.co.uk](mailto:adf@easynet.co.uk) • [www.asiandubfoundation.com](http://www.asiandubfoundation.com)



## Remembering Albert Nuh Washington

Nuh, a devout Muslim and a respected Imam throughout New York state prisons, was a former member of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Black Liberation Army (BLA). Nuh made the great transition to Allah (god) on Friday, April 28 at Coxsackie Correctional Facility in New York. Nuh's wake was held Saturday, April 29th at Masjid Ihsan. He was buried, in Muslim custom, on Monday, May 1, 2000 at Mt. Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY.

Nuh was a Freedom Fighter all his life. He was a captured Prisoner of War held behind enemy lines for over 28 years. He was first imprisoned at the age of 13 for fighting racism in his community in Harlem, New York. He joined the Black Panther Party (BPP) and participated in its many educational and survival programs in San Francisco, Denver and New York. He later joined the Black Liberation Army (BLA) formed to protect Black communities against police terror, occupation and the FBI's dirty wars against the community.

In the midst of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO (COunterINTElligence PROgram) operations, designed to neutralize and eliminate revolutionary Black leadership, Nuh, and his two co-defendants, Herman Bell and Jalil Muntaqim, were charged with the murder of two New York police in May 1971. Their first trial ended in a hung jury. During the second trial the judge and prosecution used many illegal tactics to obtain a conviction, including bribery, the beating and torture of one witness, and the threat of placing the children of several witnesses under state custody. In May 1975 Nuh and his two co-defendants, known as the New York 3, were sentenced to 25 years to life. Information that could have exonerated Nuh (and could exonerate his co-defendants)



Albert Nuh Washington photo by Jolie Stahl

was repeatedly quashed and his appeals for judicial review of this information were all denied.

In Oakland, California on Saturday, April 22, 2000 over 200 people of all ages, nationalities and religions filled the Oakland YWCA to pay tribute to an unsung hero for Black Liberation, the revolutionary prisoner of war Albert Nuh Washington (Nuh Abdul-Qayyum) – Peace Be Upon Him! Organized by the Oakland chapters of the Jericho Amnesty Movement and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, the event was a benefit to raise funds for Nuh and his family. The event was hosted by Muhjah Shakir, the western regional coordinator for the Jericho Amnesty Movement, and graced by the likes of Yuri Kochiyama, Ahmed Obafemi, Imam Abdul-Alim Musa, Nancy Jacot-Bell, Kamel Jacot-Bell, Thomas "Blood" McRary, Kali Akuno, Aya de Leon, Frankie "Free" Ramos, Prophets of Rage and many others who came to show their love and support for Nuh. Loving statements of solidarity from more than 20 u.s. political prisoners and political exiles were read and displayed, including statements from Herman Bell, Jalil Abdul-Muntaqim, Sundiata Acoli, Assata Shakur, Mutulu Shakur, Hanif Shabazz Bey, Jihad Abdul-Mumit, Russell "Maroon" Shoats, Marilyn Buck, Mumia Abu-Jamal and many others.

Nuh and his family still need your help. You can aid Nuh's family by making a financial contribution towards his funeral and burial expenses. Please make checks out to: Jericho/IFCO. Mail all donations for Brother Nuh to: Jericho • PO Box 650 • New York, NY 10009.

Nuh was not our only Freedom Fighter being held captive. There are more than 100 political prisoners presently being held captive in the united states. For most of these courageous women and men an international amnesty appeal is their only opportunity for release and justice. Join the Jericho Amnesty Movement and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement in the struggle to Free our Freedom Fighters.

For more information tel; 510.433.0115 • email

JerichoSFBay@hotmail.com

MXGMOakland1@hotmail.com

www.TheJerichoMovement.com

Kali Akuno

Free the Land!!

May 1, 2000

## Hip Hop PAC 2000

The Hip Hop Political Action Committee 2000 is an organization committed to unifying the many voices of the hip hop generation, with a chief objective of organizing the many voices of hip hop into one voice to show that hip hop is more than just music but a life style and consciousness. This PAC supports positive candidates for political office, gives and receives donations, and distributes messages to the public about issues affecting our culture. The headquarters of the PAC are in Atlanta, spearheaded By Tre Mayne Maxie and supported by Tupac's mom Afeni Shakur. You can get involved or get more info by calling 770.507.9931.

## Jamil Al-Amin aka H Rap Brown vs the Atlanta Cops

COINTELPRO is alive and well thanks to the government's vendetta against former SNCC leader H Rap Brown. H Rap Brown is now a Muslim Imam known as Jamil Al-Amin. Imam Jamil has been arrested for a shoot out that left one cop dead and another wounded. The Imam says that it is a government conspiracy to frame him for his political past and it's hard not to believe him. The only person to place Imam Jamil at the scene of the crime is the wounded officer who made the identification in between critical operations at the hospital. What is more is that the Atlanta cops have tried over 20 times to frame him for murder in the last 15 years. Check what MI has to say about the case in our dead prez interview (page 42).

## freedman's town

by Zulu King Isa

Freedman's Town was founded after the so-called emancipation proclamation by African slaves. Today, Freedman's Town is the largest and last remaining intact freed slave community in the country. However, its history may be buried in the debris of the corporate death march to gentrification. Corporations early on realized the value of this land as a premier location from downtown Houston. In an effort to get rid of Freedman's Town, the government and city took the land through bad land deeds, trickery, and Jim Crow tactics. The real cause of land loss was simply lack of legal representation. On June 12, 1996, the first federal eviction occurred – an event comparable to what happened in Waco. Much of Freedman's Town is considered historical artifacts, and is soon to be buried under the rubble of high rises and corporate schemes known as "affordable housing." Over the decades Lenwood Johnson has almost single handedly battled the corporate monarchs over the issue of the historical significance of his town. For more information contact him at 713.228.2109. Donations are appreciated; informational packets are available upon request.

## hip hop 2000 tour

Hip Hop 2000 tour, spearheaded by Cleveland MC Torman Jahi, is something to be looking out for. Jahi is appearing in 25 different universities around the country to hold concerts and workshops on topics surrounding hip hop. He will be holding stage with dead prez, KRS ONE, Medusa, Common, Reflection Eternal, Chuck D, and more. Look out for Jahi's album *Higher Elevation* in stores now. For more call the hiphop2000 info line at 440.944.5052

## janet reno says death ineffective

At her weekly Justice Department news briefing recently, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno said that she has yet to find any evidence that the death penalty deters crime. "I have inquired for most of my adult life about studies that might show that the death penalty is a deterrent. And I have not seen any research that would substantiate that point," said Reno. Before we know it, she'll be freeing Mumia.

## Derek Rocco Barnabei

Derek Rocco Barnabei has been pleading his innocence as a prisoner on Virginia's death row for nearly eight years. At the time of the crime, Derek was seeking work in the construction field. When work opportunity showed in Virginia, Derek moved. He took an apartment in a fraternity house and it was in that apartment that his girlfriend Sarah was brutally raped and murdered.

"Scores of DNA experts have come forward and signed affidavits stating that I did not rape my own girlfriend and that, further, there are roughly sixty items of forensic evidence directly linked to the crime scene, that if tested can prove my innocence. Would a guilty man want these items tested? I have been begging the courts to allow me to test them, but to date they have ignored my pleas. The courts, as I've said, will not release this evidence for testing, and even if they did, they would not pay for the tests to be done, which would cost roughly five thousand dollars per test, which translates to roughly three hundred thousand dollars in testing alone. In America, justice has a price tag, and I could not afford it."

A quote from the prosecutor in the trial directly points to the racism backing the case:

"This is a circumstantial case. We don't have a motive, we don't have an eye witness, we don't have a murder weapon but what we do have, ladies and gentlemen, is a smooth talking Italian man from up north who came to this small southern town and tried to use his looks and fancy clothes to dupe us all."

Because of his Italian heritage Derek was discriminated against, hated, and silenced.

Alan Dershowitz, one of America's greatest legal minds, reviewed Derek's case and said, "In all my years of practice, never have I seen such egregious miscarriage of justice, or such a compelling case of innocence." Although Mr. Dershowitz has agreed to help, his busy schedule limits him to consulting on the case and he cannot represent Derek as attorney of record.

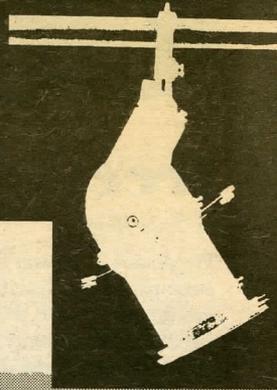
"Over the past nearly seven years of my incarceration, I have been beaten and tortured and dehumanized. One of the most horrifying memories for me was when I was first incarcerated. I've never been in prison before, so I did not know what to expect. I was to receive a crash course in prison life. I was housed in a cell that was fouled with human feces and rat droppings. When I asked to clean my cell, four hulking guards pulled me from my cell, stripped me naked, and threw me to the floor. As I lay there, one guard began unbuckling his trousers and uttering profanities, indicating his intent to sodomize me. I fought back, and although I was thankfully not raped, I was beaten within an inch of my life and forced to eat the excrement from my cell wall."

In America prisons and the death penalty are big business. The prison system in America is a billion-dollar industry and it is a well-known fact that it costs more money to execute a man than it does to imprison him for life.

For more info or to support Derek write to Mrs. Barnabei • 745 9<sup>th</sup> street • Sommers Point N.J 08244



# blu spotlight



## Atlanta

**SisterPhyre conference**, August 23 – 27 2000. The vision behind this event is simple: to gather a cross section of women who are connected to hip hop culture to discuss, analyze, ponder, and debate hip hop and the various ways it affects us on daily basis. This includes creating a place for sisters to validate one another. The gathering defines the women of the “hip hop generation” as being between the ages of 18 – 36 and having a love, not just for the music, but for all that it represents. Email burketaranaj@hotmail.com for complete information.

## Arizona

### Big Mountain

This is where the largest forced relocation of American Indians in the 20th century being pushed through by Peabody Western Coal Company, which intends to strip mine the ancestral lands of the Dineh. This is being done with the aid of the corrupt US and tribal governments. The Dineh who have refused to leave their land and relocate to government supplied land (the site of a major radioactive spill) are being harassed with illegal eviction notices and livestock confiscations, deprived of their well water and firewood, and forced to live in constant fear. Go to Big Mountain to join a growing group of activists who are standing in solidarity with the Dineh.

## Bay Area

### Black Dot Café

Can't stop the flow at this joint, home to mighty Black Dot Artists Collective. Check out their regular open mic/open instrumental session “The Word” every Thursday. 2330 International Boulevard • Oakland CA • 510.533.6629

### La Peña Cultural Center

The spot for cultural and community activism in Berkeley. An art center and a restaurant, La Peña showcases music, theater, dance, film, and visual artists, and supports the movement. 3105 Shattuck Avenue • Berkeley • 510.849.2568 www.lapena.org

**Marcus Bookstores**, located in the San Francisco Bay Area, have been selling books by and about Black people for forty years and counting. Marcus Books also host cultural and literary events – check www.marcusbooks.com for the calendar of events.

Oakland Store • 3900 Martin L. King, Jr. Way • Oakland, CA 94609 • (near MacArthur/BART) • tel: 510.652.2344 • San Francisco Store • 1712 Fillmore Street • San Francisco, CA 94115 • 9near Post Street)

## Boston

### Urban Griots

In the African tradition...there were those who kept the history and stories of their time and before them. They were called GRIOTS. This is the hip hop translation. Poetry and open mic readings every third Saturday at Lucy Parsons Bookstore • 549 Columbus Avenue • South End Boston 617.680.1890 • salih5@earthlink.net

## Chicago

### Puerto Rican Cultural Center

Grassroots community building at its best – the Cultural Center provides educational & Community programs, an art gallery, and coordinates the annual Fiesta Boriqua. The Center continues to Face continual harrasment for its involvement in the struggle for Puerto Rican self determination. 2607 W. Division • Chicago, IL 60622 • 773.278.0885 • PRPOWPP@aol.com • www.geocities.com/capitalHill/Lobby/5919

### Dr Pedro Albizu Campos Museum of PR History & Culture

This museum located in the Puerto Rican section of Chicago pays tribute to the great revolutionary Pedro Albizu Campos. Paintings, posters, pictures, and even a bronze statue, tell the story of Albizu and the Puerto Rican liberation struggle. 1457 N. California St • Chicgo, IL • 312.342.4880

## Los Angeles

**Project Blowed** is a hip hop educational seminar held pretty much every Thursday night at 4343 Leimert Blvd. from around 8PM to midnight. Founded in December 1994 by Capitol Records recording artists Aceyalone and Abstract Rude, and hosted by Ben Caldwell (formerly of I-Fresh), Project Blowed offers artistic improvement and cultural freedom for many youth in the area. It is not a nightclub, as claimed by some avenues of the media. Rather, it is a fully-functional educational workshop serving the community in many ways.

**Luna Sol Café** Founded as the Peace &

Justice Center in LA's raw MacArthur Park area, Luna Sol is a collective that serves up third millennial culture along with the all-fresh vegetarian cuisine. Luna Sol collective members let it be know that “we're here for the people,” and back it up by providing a forum for community organizations as well as an art exhibit venue for neighborhood youth. Jerry Quigley hosts the “33 and 1/3” hip hop showcase on Monday nights. 2501 West 6<sup>th</sup> Street (btw Alvarado and Rampart) • 213.380.4754

## New York City

### Pregones Touring Puerto Rican

**Theater Collection** is celebrating 20 years of award winning productions this spring. 700 Gand Concourse 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor • Bronx NY 10451 • 718.585.1202 • pregones@aol.com

**AFRICALIA** means that the funk is heavy and BLU's favorite afrobeat band Conjunto Antibalas takes the dancing crowd to new levels. AFRICALIA is every Friday at the No Moore Bar • 234 W Broadway @ No. Moore (Tribeca) • A,C,E to Canals Street or 1/9 to Franklin Street.

### Nkiru Books

Brooklyn's source of African, Caribbean, Native American, Latin, bilingual books, Ts, music, and BLU. Nkiru has also been hosting an increasing number of cultural programs and events, so be sure to stop through. Owned by Mos Def and Talib Kweli from Black Star. 76 St Marks Avenue (Park Slope) • 718.783.6306

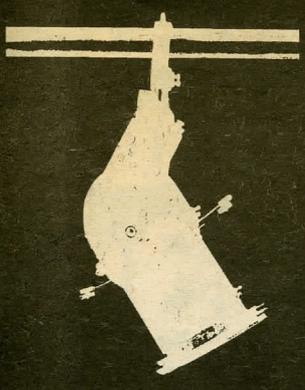
### Caribbean Cultural Center

The Center has all kinds of concerts, exhibits, and educational events focusing on the African diaspora. *Indo-Caribbean Heritage*, a multi-media program celebrating the arts and culture of East Indians of the Diaspora in Guyana, Trinidad, Suriname and the US, is currently showing. 408 W 58<sup>th</sup> Street • 212.307.7420 • www.caribectr.org.

### Nuyorican Poets Cafe

Founded by the original Nuyorican poets in 1974, The Nuyorican Poets Cafe is a living room hosting the freshest art to come through the ports of Nueva York. Situated in Manhattan's Loisaída, the Nuyorican collective attempts to provide a stage for non mainstream artists to show their work. 236 E. 3d St. in Lower East Side • NYC • 212.505.8183

**Hope Community**, a not-for-profit



# (places to go)

organization dedicated to enriching the lives of those who live and work in Harlem, kicks off its Poetas con Cafe series on Mother's Day. The series, which will highlight the restoration work and revitalization that Hope is championing in this community, will be continued on June 18; July 16; August 20 and September 17, 2000. Modesto Flores Garden between 104th & 105th Streets & Lexington Ave • Dalissa Vargas @ 212.860.8821

### Charas

Charas is a cultural center in NYC's Lower East Side, or Loisaida as its known to Puerto Ricans from the neighborhood, that offers space for artists and community organizations at low cost. Charas is now in a state of resistance. The racist Mayor of NYC sold Charas to a fake estate developer as part of his fascistic scheme to destroy pockets of political and cultural dissent in NYC, but the people of Loisaida refuse to be moved. Check out any of the events and shows that go on in Charas and support their struggle. 360 E. 10th St • Lower East Side • NYC NY • 212.982.0627

### The Center for Puerto Rican Studies @ Hunter College in NYC

A reference library of Puerto Rican history and culture with many important out of print books you can't find anywhere else. They also have an extensive photo archive and video library. An important and vital place for anyone who wants to get the real story on the history and culture of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican diaspora. Lexington Avenue and 68th Street • NYC • 212.772.4197

### Inhumane

X-dreem designer Dave Dennis is opening a new outlet May 10th which will double as a info source for activist issues and a place to pick up the newest gear from X-dreem. 195 Mulberry Street.

### El Museo Del Barrio

When Puerto Rican educators, artists and community activists (including members of the Young Lords) founded El Museo del Barrio in 1969, they envisioned an educational institution that would reflect the richness of their culture. Thirty years later, as New York City's only Latino museum dedicated to Puerto Rican, Caribbean and Latin

American art, El Museo retains its strong community roots as a place of cultural pride and self-discovery, at 1230 Fifth Avenue • El Barrio, NYC

### Julia De Burgos Cultural Center & The Taller Boricua

The Julia De Burgos Cultural Center hosts a variety of events such as the Puerto Rican Film Festival, Puerto Rican theater, musical performances and other cultural events. It also hosts the Taller Boricua, a Puerto Rican art gallery, that was founded by the Young Lords in the 70s and has struggled to survive in many locations, finally finding its home in the Julia De Burgos Center. 1680 Lexington Avenue @ 106th Street • El Barrio, NYC • 212.831.4333

### La Fonda Boricua

Located right in the heart of El Barrio, La Fonda Boricua is, surprisingly, one of the few straight up Puerto Rican Restaurants in NYC. Serving the real comido criolla, La Fonda has become the spot for bohemian Boricuas to cure their culinary cravings while they cultivate cultural revolution. La Fonda also has the best juke box this side of San Juan. 106 St, btwn Lexington & 3d • El Barrio, NYC

### El Puente

Founded in 1982 by community activists responding to a wave of violence in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood, El Puente is a community and youth leadership movement that host cultural activities, operates the first public high school focused on human rights, a health center that works with AIDS issues, and is involved in environmental issues. Program: El Puente, Brooklyn, NY Contact(s): Luis Garden Acosta, President: 718.387.0404 • Frances Lucerna, Academy Principal: 718.599.2895

## Philadelphia

### Black Market Gallery

1700 North 5th Street, 3rd Floor (at 5th and Cecil B Moore) • 215.769.1608

### Taller Puertorriqueno

Taller Puertorriqueno was established in 1974, as a community based cultural education organization. Taller's primary purpose is to preserve, develop and promote Puerto Rican artistic and cultural traditions, as well as to support a better understanding of other Latin

American cultures. Taller is situated in the largest Puerto Rican neighborhood of Philadelphia. 2721 N. 5th St • 215.426.3311

**Rome & Jewels** – the world premier of a hip hop ballet that is the story of Romeo and Juliet told through the eyes of a hip hop poet. Presented by Rennie Harris Puremovements, Rome & Jewels opens June 14 at Wilma Theater and will be touring nationally throughout the summer. Rennie Harris and his troupe bring the street expression and death defying athleticism of hip hop dance to mainstream theater and dance audiences. For details check [www.puremovement.com](http://www.puremovement.com).

## Selma AL

### The 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement

will be sponsoring its 15th Annual Summer Leadership camp this summer from July 7 - 14 in Selma, AL. The theme of this year's camp is L.A.C.E.S.: A Million and One Ways to Build a Movement. The organization's philosophy is built around the L.A.C.E.S. philosophy which stands for Leadership, Academics, Culture, Economics, and Spirituality. The camp is designed for young people ages 13-18. For further information: 1.888.79.IMANI • [youth421C@aol.com](mailto:youth421C@aol.com).

## Upstate NY

**Coqui Latin Jazz Café** The only Latin Jazz spot of its kind in the mid-Hudson valley. Serving Puerto Rican food, and live music, Coqui is the perfect spot for the Jibaro who's far from home. 331 Rte. 32N • New Paltz, NY 12561 • 914.256.9575

## UK

**The Drum** is Birmingham's newest arts venue dedicated to promoting African, Asian and Caribbean arts and cultural activities. The Drum provides a much needed platform for local, national and international artists and is the place where everyone – Black and White – can experience contemporary urban culture. 144 Potters Lane • Aston • Birmingham • B6 4UU • tel: 0121.333.2400 • [emailinfo@the-drum.org.uk](mailto:emailinfo@the-drum.org.uk) • <http://www.the-drum.org.uk/home.html>



# Rican Revolution Rican Revolution

## Resistance 101

The raw reality of Puerto Rican resistance is the Taino, the African, the Jibaro. Slaves, santos, seditious subversives; screams, sacrifices, survival, Spanish boots on Borinqueno bodies. indigenuous up-risings, esclavo conspiracies, abolitionists actions, shackled Africans, Betances, Bracetti, and a single starred bandera, sewing the seeds of rebelation, re-creation, El Grito de Lares ... and the nationless nation of boricuas burning sugarcane, spain, the maine, Lola y La Borinquena bullets, bibles, and bootstraps and Porto Rico Ponce massacre, Hiram, Elias and Riggs and rigged elections, injections, rejections, connections, Canales, jailed in Jayuya for the crime of a re-defined Puerto Rican state (of mind)less pushers, pirates, presidents and the Ponce plaza prophets, Campos' y corretjer y coraje, y imprisonment for insurrection, instigation, infiltration, separation, demilitarization, sterilization, marginalization, indignation, imagination and independence is resistance and rebellion and revolutionary violence, silence, sit ins, dark skins and Marin and Marines, death and docility be damned. Griselio and Oscar, and attempted assassination of someone elses United nation, Lolita, and Rafa, and Irvin, and Andres, y mas des 25 anos for an arm in arm with arms assault on the capitalists common-

wealth con-gress colonizers Rage, resistance Rios and Rivera and detonations, demonstrations, downpression be damned, Young Lords and landlords, Latin Kings and Porto Rican dreams on lock down, El Barrio, Barcello, Rosello y que se yo, Jibaritos and jitterbugging junkie Jesus genocide on the corners of the corners of the calles de Nuyo-rican, freakin', still seekin' a cause, (un)united states urban warfare, guerrilla welfare, ghetto workfare, food stamps and concentration camps, food for thought, salsa con sabotage sold and bought, Puerto Rican Peoples Army apostles, autonomous, military Machetero messiahs, pariahs, national liberation, frustration, castration, re-creation of one nation under god, under-ground, under-represented, prevented, resented, lamented, re-invented, inducted, instructed, and ricanstructed ... Lucy and Luis and Alicia and Adolfo and Alejandrina, and Antonio and Carlos and Carmen and Ricardo and Elizam and Dylcia and Juan and Edwin and Haydee and no solace for Solis and FALN, FBI against I... land, love, and liberated zones and sticks and stones and skulls and bones, and bombs, psalms, uncle toms, and the storm before it calms cancer, cures, criollo(camp) David... (save it) and Goliath (defy us) and Vieques and vultures and vampires and violence and value and victory(?)... and what Albizu called valor

When tyranny is law  
revolution is order  
- Albizu

Wherever a Puerto Rican is, the duty of a  
Puerto Rican is to make revolution.  
- Gloria Gonzalez of The Young Lords

If the men won't fight for the lib-  
eration of Puerto Rico then we  
women will - Lolita

u.s. navy out of Vieques!

VIVA  
LA REPUBLICA  
CABAJA LOS ASESINOS!

Wanting to be free is to begin  
being free - Betances



# FBI vs. PRCC

The PRCC is the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, founded by a group of independentistas in the early 70s.

In 1972 a group of eight Puerto Rican students was expelled from Chicago's Tuley High School for organizing a strike against the lack of bilingual/bicultural education. Within days, community leaders and the students themselves had begun to organize a school of their own. The Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican Highschool was founded to give students an alternative to public high school (where the dropout rate had recently climbed to 75%) where they would receive a culturally relevant education from teachers who cared about their welfare, both in and out of the classroom.



Pedro Albizu Campos

**Alejandrina Torres**, a recently released political prisoner, remembers it as a difficult beginning. From the start, local government and school officials harassed the new high school, and made public accusations that the teachers were "indoctrinating youth with anti-US government sentiment and Puerto Rican independence ideology." But despite the accusations, community organizers continued their work. Through surveys and street interviews conducted by the students, they began to focus on real issues affecting the community. "It's not enough, just helping," says Alejandrina. "It takes more than help. You have to feel the pulse of the community, the dynamics of community organization."

The FBI started trying to shut down the Pedro Albizu Campos High School almost as soon as it was founded. In 1976, four key members were forced underground when the FBI accused them of using the school as a safehouse for weapons. Soon after, Oscar López Rivera, Ida Luz Rodriguez, Carlos Alberto Torres, and Haydee Beltran were imprisoned. Nevertheless, the school continued to function and community support grew.

**Opposition** reached a climax when key staff were effectively removed from all programs and incarcerated. Among those singled out was Alejandrina Torres, a full time employee at the time of her arrest in 1983. This was a serious obstacle, but as Alejandrina says, "I was just a part of the work, and the work was about securing justice for my people. It was bigger than me. Of course, it was minus one shoulder, so to speak, but my incarceration didn't affect it."

The FBI's efforts to end the program, which culminated in a 1979 Grand Jury Investigation, were as ludicrous as they were obsessive. Federal agents married into Puerto Rican families in an attempt to infiltrate the community. As recently as the 90s, hundreds of thousands of dollars were offered to students who were to testify that they had been

**The FBI started trying to shut down the Pedro Albizu Campos High School almost as soon as it was opened.**

"indoctrinated into the politics of independence," and were being taught to make bombs. But the students, loyal to their school and the community it represented, refused to accept these bribes. Anyone who spent any length of time at the PRCC was kept under constant surveillance, and many were later visited by federal agents.

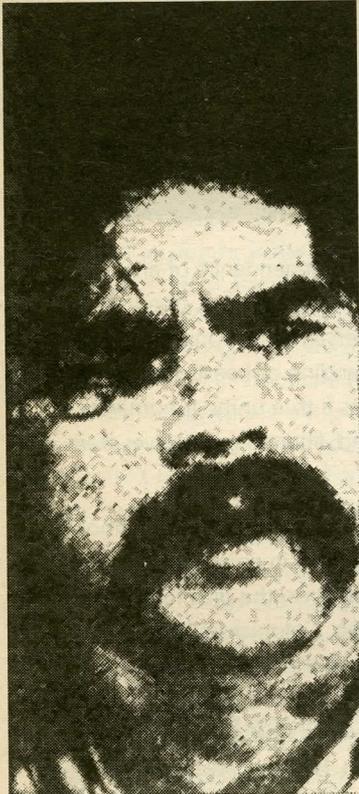


Edwin Cortes and Alejandrina Torres

# How the FBI tried to crush a growing independentista movement in the 1980s in Chicago by trying to close down a high school dedicated to Puerto Rican education & culture and failed.

by Lori and Jean Potts

The FBI's most blatant act of intimidation occurred in 1983 on a school day, when 100 men in



Oscar López Rivera

jump suits broke into the school just as students and parents were arriving for classes. Shocked and bewildered, they were forced to look on as \$25,000 worth of equipment was destroyed. Sharpshooters were posted around the center during the eight hours when the FBI broke windows, confiscated files and equipment, and "searched the building for weapons". With professional accuracy, The Chicago Sun declared the next day: "Terrorist Hide-Away - School and Day Care Center Raided by FBI SWAT Team."

Of course nothing was found that could possibly be called evidence for this allegation. However, the government never paid a cent in reparations for damage done. With the community justifiably terrified for its children, enrollment in the high school and day care dropped to only a handful, but the continued support for the school was unmistakable. By 8:00 PM that night, close to \$6000 had been collected in donations of \$5, \$8, and \$10 at a time.

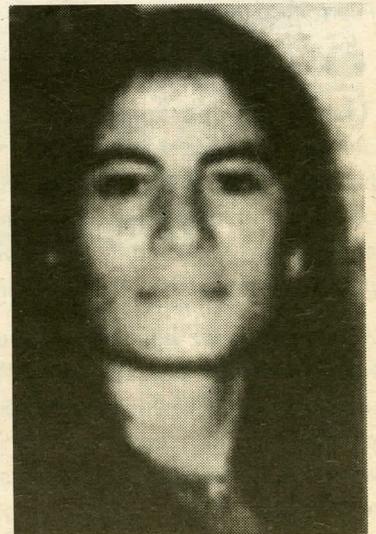
"While a lot of people left, a lot more came back," says Lourdes, a teacher at the high school and a niece of political prisoner Oscar López Rivera. "We rebuilt the high school twice as beautiful and twice as strong as before the raid."

Today, while the accusations continue, students are graduating from the Albizu High School every year. Many go on to serve as teachers and educators in their own communities. The Pedro Albizu Campos high school emphasizes the study of Puerto Rican history and culture to encourage students to find their own identity. "When I first saw this school, I said to myself, 'Is this a school?'" says student Jessica Delgado. As they achieve cultural identity, students realize that the struggle for independence - not only of Puerto Rico, but of their own communities - is essential to their progress.

## ... the FBI broke windows, confiscated files and equipment and "searched the building for weapons".

Students know they'll have a chance at Albizu Campos high school. The high school is often a last stop for students who have dropped-out of every other available program. As Edgar Delgado says, "My friends kept pushing me to transfer here. Here at Albizu the staff would rather help you stop getting into trouble. At my other schools they didn't care about who you were and where it was that you came from. You were just a number."

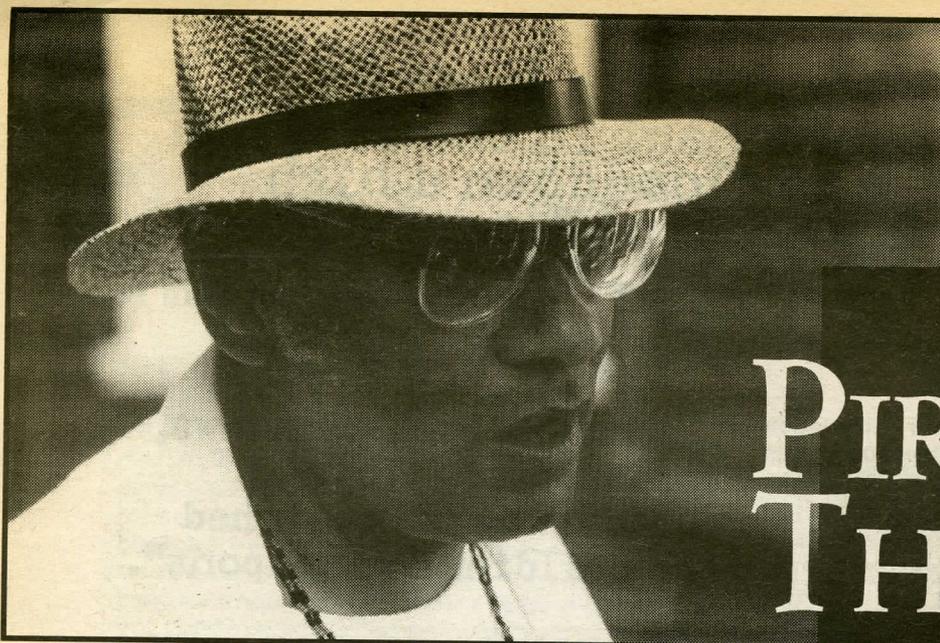
Although hundreds of lives have been positively affected by the work of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, hundreds more are in need of better legal services, health care, and education. Expansion of the school, development of a computer lab that will be available to the community in an attempt to bridge the technological gap, accreditation of the high school and day care in order to get better funding, and a move to a new location on Division Street in the heart of the Puerto Rican community are some of the plans that are being worked on. As a response to the criminalization of youth by the authorities, they are trying to educate the public about gang issues. Alejandrina's says, "My vision is still the same! I see a community better organized, better informed, taking charge of its destiny, not just wallowing in its misery." She insists on the importance of being involved on a deeper level than just setting up an office and making services available. "In order to create the alternatives, and in order for them to be effective, I personally have to internalize the problems, to believe that these conditions are real and that I personally need to change them. It's very important that community leaders realize this, and are able to become part of it, to live in it, to be in it. Then you will have the desire to change these problems."



Ida Luz Rodríguez

**Puerto Rican Cultural Center**  
1671 North Claremont Street  
Chicago IL 60647  
773.342.8023





# thoughts on independence

written in 1976  
for the bicentennial  
of the u.s.

# PIRI THOMAS

**For forty-seven years** I have been a spectator to the yearly celebration of the Fourth of July. I have sung "My Country 'tis of Thee" as a child in ghetto schools. I know now, as a descendant of Puerto Ricans, that I was singing not of this country but of Puerto Rico. I was born in a colonial, neo-slavery society. My mother, my father, my three brothers, all died victims of an uncaring society, victims of the ghetto principle. I was born in Harlem Hospital, eyes open, ears open, mind free and alive, my heart and love of dignity bursting for the realization of *un Puerto Rico libre*.



**There is wisdom in our people.** We are not cowards, our sons and daughters have died in many wars for other peoples' freedom. We are not slovenly or lazy or in a state of apathy. It is only the economic chains, backed by armed might, that bind us, that have prevented us in the past from raising firmly the flag of liberation.

**As a people, we have always** sought to gain our freedom through peaceful political means. We only reacted violently when we were abused by those whose only thought for freedom and dignity was their own. As we reacted against Spanish oppression in Lares; as we reacted against U.S. oppression in Ponce, where we were gunned down, unarmed in the street; as we reacted in 1950 at Jayuya against the repression of our people and were met with machine guns and Air Force strafings. But our fight is far from over, our will far from daunted. We are not Johnny-Come-Latelies to this earth; we existed as a people in many ethnic forms as long as any other race. We say to the world: we have gotten up off our knees, prepared to die if need be. We have awakened; we are arising; we are uniting. As a people, we are fighting. As it was written long before my time, so we must believe today, "Arise, we have nothing to lose but our chains ... it is better to die on one's feet, than to live on one's knees as well as die there."

**No country has the right** to deny freedom to another. To the United States – you, who call yourself the "land of the free" – we say, stand not in the way of our indepen-

dence. The freedom and independence of any country is an inalienable right. We seek freedom born of dignity and understanding, consideration for each other, a true blending of hearts and minds in a solidarity that creates a true unity of humanity. All humans, hand in hand, liberating ourselves from ignorance and hate.

**But we all know** that freedom is not won without struggle; that progress is born in pain. No revolution can succeed unless it is built on the firm foundation of love and understanding. Colonialism has wrought great suffering on the world. I believe the oppressed people of the world will prevail, but only through total unity. **Love is the basis of our struggle. As human beings, let us not allow ourselves to be manipulated and separated.** Let us rather solidify and unite. The enemies of human freedom all too often work their way into freedom's struggle in order to plant the seeds of discontent and distrust.



**Unlimited wealth makes** for unlimited power – almost! But the oppressors of the world cannot sit without fidgeting nervously on their thrones of blood, murder, racism, and foul exploitation, all the while attempting with actors' smiles to give the outward appearance of human beings. Such is their hypocrisy that they are going mad trying to ease their horrendous acts against humanity. "My Country 'tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty, of whom, to what, do we sing?"



[www.cheverote.com](http://www.cheverote.com)  
**Por Estas Calles Bravas**  
 por Piri Thomas  
 Piri has reissued his classic *Down These Mean Streets* in Spanish to celebrate its 30 year anniversary. available everywhere

# PAVANTHE

Rubén Ayala



Photos by Michael Abramson

notes from a conversation with **Lester Caleb Santiago San Juan**, Puerto Rico

**The violence** of colonialism is just as cruel, inhuman, and insensitive as the violent responses of the colonized. There exists abundant literature which explains the psychological, political, economic, social, cultural, religious, and spiritual consequences which colonial systems produce. For people who live in countries which have achieved their political sovereignty, it is not possible to feel the pain and brokenness of colonialism, and so it is difficult for them to understand the behavior of people who were born, raised, and live in a colonial system. Puerto Rico was invaded and dominated by the military forces of the United States in an expansionist venture under the Monroe Doctrine. Of course the actions of the nationalists are considered to be crimes to the colonizing Metropolis. How were the acts of General George Washington considered by the English?

political discrimination for seeking independence or being critical of government policies. All of this happened with the knowledge, and in most cases, with the support of US intelligence agencies. No one can deny that in Puerto Rico, the ideal of independence was criminalized and that until 1952 the flag was considered a subversive symbol. Today our people hoist it as an icon of our national identity.

**It is true** that a system of legal, constitutional, and some civil rights exists that surpasses that of the last decade's dictatorships of the countries of Central and South America. But it is no less true that the Puerto Rican people are denied the fundamental right of self-determination. The local intelligence agencies, the FBI, COINTELPRO, and the armed forces in Puerto Rico have been in charge of main-

## **violence exists because we are a people who have been violated, assaulted, and dominated**

**The reason** for all alleged violent conduct by the Puerto Rican political prisoners is the project of the domination of our nation, which in 1898 enjoyed self-government and was illegally delivered to the US as war booty. If it is true that the violent actions which produce pain for innocent persons are not nice, it is no less true that the colonial system has been just as violent during the last 100 years. The people of Puerto Rico have resisted at the cost of blood and life. The resistance has been so active that even today the people of Puerto Rico maintain their culture as a space of resistance. Attempts to assimilate us are also acts of violence, which in many cases have mutilated the self-esteem of many of our people.

**The North American** society should know that none of the acts of the political prisoners (although they did not receive popular support) have been sufficient to alienate them from our society. They are received as national symbols and are contributing to creating an atmosphere of national unity. It is lamentable that there were innocent victims, but don't forget — and this is not to justify — that hundreds of dozens of Puerto Ricans were vilely killed by North American troops in the streets of our country in the 1930s, that thousands of Puerto Ricans were imprisoned for the crime of seeking independence for their country, and that hundred of thousands of others were pursued and had government records opened and suffered

maintaining absolute power and domination, despite the constant challenges to this power. This is the other side of the coin which must be recognized in order to create a balance and complete the exercise of sincerity and honesty which we all want.

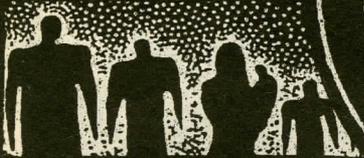
**The majority** of North Americans, who are good people with great hearts, are unaware of the outrages which their government commits in our countries. But they should understand that if today they suffer violence from a group of nationalist Puerto Ricans, it is because they decided one day, wrongly, to dominate our country. Do you know Puerto Ricans who attack other countries? Recognize that violence exists because we are a people who have been violated, assaulted, and dominated. This does not give us the right to injure innocent people, but it explains a little of why it happens. Put yourselves in our place and maybe you can feel a little of our indignation and pain.

**I propose** that some process of reconciliation and pardon be established. Who of you is willing to ask pardon for 100 years of colonialism and to struggle for the self-determination of our people? Perhaps this would put an end to the violent struggle and the shedding of innocent blood. I ask you this with a simple heart and spiritual humility. I ask it of you in the name of God.



**PUERTO RICO**  
 A  
**CHRONOGRAPHY**  
 BY  
**TEOFILO OLIVIERI**  
 2000  
**FREEDOM ON A LONG CHAIN**

There were no Puerto Ricans 500 years ago. There were an Indian



people called Tainos and they lived on an island called Boriquen.

1512: Alonso Manso first bishop of Puerto Rico, arrives on the island, wiping out all vestiges of the Indians religion, forcing Christianity on them.

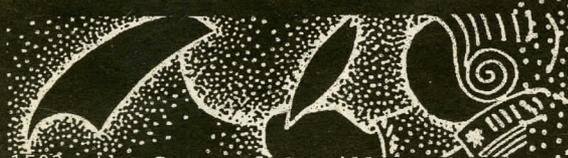


1530: Gold production declined rapidly. Many Spaniards leave. Gov. Manuel de Lando takes steps to replace fading Indian force with more African slaves. Also, European diseases killed many Tainos as well.

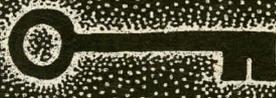


1493: Columbus discovered the island of Boriquen for Europe on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November.

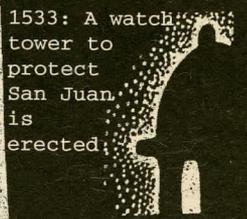
For the Black slaves, life in Puerto Rico was short, nasty, and brutish.



1503: the Crown of Castille authorizes the shipping of black slaves to the new world.



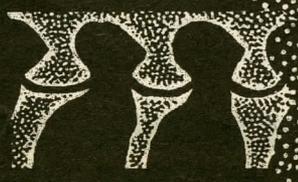
1531: Govenor Lando describes Puerto Rico as "the key of the West Indies."



1533: A watch tower to protect San Juan is erected.



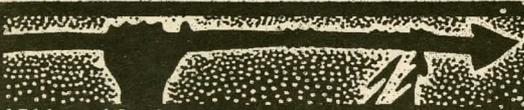
1508: Ponce de Leon begins the Spanish occupation of Boriquen.



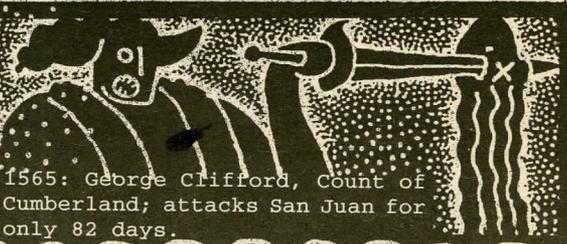
1509: The arrival of the first slaves.



1565: The last Taino rebellion against the Spaniards. Governor Lando declares that there are no Indians left on the island.



1511: Life become a continuous nightmare for the Tainos. The Indians launched their first rebellion against the Spaniards Thousands of Tainos were killed and many fled to nearby islands.



1565: Gebrge Clifford, Count of Cumberland; attacks San Juan for only 82 days.

1625: A Dutch expedition attacks and takes San Juan. After 2 months, the Dutch, torching most of it, sailed away. Puerto Rico was not occupied by foreign troops until 1898.

1765: Marshall Alejandro O'Reilly arrives in Puerto Rico. Census of the population: 44,833. Of these 5037 were black slaves. Of the remaining 39,846 only several hundred were Creoles (locally born whites) and the rest were free blacks, mulattoes, and a mixture of the latter two.

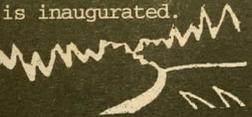
1845: Spain finally gives in to British pressures and puts an end to the slave trade in Puerto Rico.

1868: Proindependence groups take over the town of Lares and proclaim the creation of the Republic of Puerto Rico

Teofilo Olivieri is a Puerto Rican artist living in Jersey City, NJ. He's been doing art for fifteen years. To check it out or contact him, go to [www.teofiloolivieri.com](http://www.teofiloolivieri.com).

1881: The Assimilist Party is founded.

1886: The Carretera Militar connecting San Juan to Rio Piedras is inaugurated.



1887: The Puerto Rican Autonomist party is founded. Reign of Terror is launched against the autonomists and reformists in general. Among those arrested and thrown into the dungeons of El Morro is Roman Baldorioty de Castro.

1899: San Ciriaco hurricane devastates the island. Gen. John Eaton is appointed Superintendent of Public Instruction. All newspapers published in Puerto Rico are placed under the direct control of the U.S. Military Government. The Puerto Rican Republican Party is founded.

1889: Baldorioty de Castro dies in prison.

1891: Pedro Albizu Campos



is born in Ponce.

1892: The Cuban Revolutionary is founded in New York City by Jose Marti. A Puerto Rican section of the party is organized.

1900: The Foraker Act sets up civil government. Charles H. Allen becomes the first Civilian Governor under U.S. colonial rule. The 1st Labor Congress is held.

1903: The University of Puerto Rico is founded.



1904: The Unionist party, led by Luis Munoz Rivera is founded.

1895: Cuban revolutionaries launch war of independence.



1910: Under the leadership of Santiago Iglesias Pantin, la Federacion Libre de Trabajadores is founded.

1911: The College of Agriculture and Engineering is established in Mayaguez.



1912: Matinezo Contron founds the Puerto Rican Independence Party.

1913: The Unionist Party eliminates statehood from its program. 1915: The Puerto Rican Socialist Party (led by Santiago Iglesias) is founded.

1916: Luis Munoz Rivera dies.

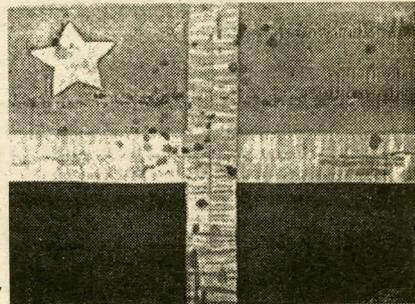
1898: The United States goes to war with Spain. Spanish troops in Cuba are defeated. U.S. Troops occupy the Philippines. In July, U.S. Troops occupy Puerto Rico. In September Spain and the United States sign the Treaty of Paris by virtue of which Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States. A U.S. General is named by Washington to govern the island. Luis Munoz Martin is born.

1917: The United States enters World War I. In March, the Jones Act is passed. The new Act imposes U.S. Citizenship on Puerto Ricans and makes them subject to the draft laws of the metropolis.



### TAP ROOTS: Lares flag

The Grito de Lares flag came into existence in 1868. Sewn by the Puerto Rican revolutionary Marianna Bracetti in the inland town of Lares, Puerto Rico, it was intended to become the national flag of the "Republic of Puerto Rico" during the failed Grito De Lares Rebellion against Spanish rule on September 23, 1868. Designed by the revolutionary and scholar Dr. Ramon Emeterio Betances, its design was intended to honor the Antillean Confederacy and the nationalist forces of the Dominican Republic, where Betances had been exiled to due to his activity around the Puerto Rican independence struggle. The original flag is still preserved at the University of Puerto Rico.



# THE REVOLUTION IN THE REVOLUTION THE REVOLU



Womyn have been an integral part of all struggles for liberation, often fighting side by side with men on the front lines. Puerto Rican womyn are no exception. The history of resistance to U.S. imperialism and colonialism in Puerto Rico demonstrates the courage and passion of womyn unafraid to fight arm in arm with arms alongside their compañeros.

The Puerto Rican revolutionary poet, **Lola Rodríguez de Tío** is best known for penning the lyrics to *La Borinqueña*, a song written in support of the rebels who carried out the Grito de Lares rebellion of 1868. *La Borinqueña* would go on to become the Independista movement's official anthem. Lola was also politically active in many Latin American struggles and worked closely with the Cuban revolutionary and writer José Martí to organize the Cuban war for independence.

**Marianna Bracetti**, another heroine of the Grito de Lares uprising who was imprisoned for her involvement during that campaign, was known as *Brazo de Oro* (Golden Arm) for creating the banner that was raised by the 19th century insurrectionists who demanded a free Puerto Rico. This original Boricua banner continues to be recognized as Puerto Rico's revolutionary flag, and Marianna is recognized as one of the great Puerto Rican patriots in our story.

**Blanca Canales** was yet another Puerto Rican womyn who took up arms against our oppressor. She planned, organized, and led the *Jayuya* rebellion of 1954, which is now seen as one of the hallmark events in the history of the Puerto Rican liberation struggle. She spent ten years in prison for her efforts, but continued to support the cause of Puerto Rican independence for the rest of her life.

**Lolita Lebron**, one of the most famous Puerto Rican womyn revolutionaries, led a commando assault on the United States Congress in 1954. Lolita was given a life sentence, and spent 25 years in a US prison before being pardoned in 1979. She remains unrepentant for her actions and her beliefs, and continues to be actively involved in the struggle for Puerto Rican liberation.

In the 1960s and 70s, womyn were rising within the ranks of various socialist and revolutionary organizations, including the FALN (Fuerzas Armadas del Liberacion Nacional), an armed clandestine organization that advocated Puerto Rican independence. The womyn of the FALN were part of the insurgency against the abuses of American colonial corporations and the U.S. military occupying forces in Puerto Rico. Relying on their international right to fight colonialism by any means necessary, they followed in the footsteps of their defiant fore-mothers and took up arms in the name of Puerto Rican liberation. Many of these womyn

warriors were captured and sent to U.S. prisons where they suffered nearly twenty-years of ideological violence for their belief in a free Puerto Rico.

Among these prisoners of war were **Ida Luz Rodríguez, Alicia Rodríguez, Carmen Valentín, Alejandrina Torres, Dylcia Pagan, and Haydée Beltran**, who remains in prison. As the struggle for self determination in Puerto Rico continues, so does the commitment of these womyns to control their own destinies. Since their release from prison last year, many of these courageous freedom fighters have now become involved in Puerto Rico's latest battle to remove the U.S. navy from Vieques.

The Young Lords Party, a grass roots organization that fought for the political, social, and economic needs and dignity of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora, also had many revolutionary womyn among its ranks. Former members **Iris Morales, Sonia Ivany, Olgie Robles**, and other sisters continue today the powerful work of self-empowerment that they began in the Young Lords over thirty years ago.

Other luchadoras were part of various organizations that continued the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence and the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners (the Nationalists of 1954 and members of the FALN). Among them, **Esperanza Martell, Blanca Vazquez, and Lillian Jimenez**, who led the organization known as the Latin Women's Collective in the 1970s, and are still active in various organizations that seek self determination for Puerto Rico and empowerment for the Puerto Rican nation. These womyn, along with longtime activists **Doña Rosa Escobar and Gloria Quinones**, are also key organizers in the fight against the U.S. Navy occupation of Vieques.

Today, in the front lines of Vieques, the Vieques Woman's Alliance brings the damage and destruction that the U.S. Navy and government has wreaked environmentally, physically, and culturally on their people and land to the international forefront.

The development of leadership of Puerto Rican womyn by Puerto Ricans is absolutely necessary in the war against exploitation, oppression and injustice. The spirit and strength of Puerto Rican womyn have proven throughout history to be eternally righteous, revolutionary, and resilient, protecting and preparing us for the revolutions that lie ahead.

by Sonia Gonzalez

# THE REVOLUTION THE REVOLUTION IN THE REVOL



details from a painting by Oscar López Rivera

**Dylcia Pagan** was recently released after spending eighteen years in federal prison for her participation in the Puerto Rican liberation struggle. Born to Puerto Rican parents in New York City in 1946, as a teenager she became involved in the Civil Rights struggle and the emerging Puerto Rican independence movement during the time when the Young Lords were organizing in East Harlem.

While she was attending Brooklyn College, Dylcia became involved in organizing the takeover of City College by Puerto Rican students, from which emerged the Puerto Rican Student Union. After finishing school she co-hosted a show on ABC which integrated community and Puerto Rican themes in an effort to increase awareness of these issues. Because of frustration with how the media was portraying the Puerto Rican community, Dylcia, along with Piri Thomas and a group of artists at Comite demonstrated during a PBS telethon. As a result, the first show on television about the history of Puerto Rico was developed, with Dylcia as associate producer. "We created television with consciousness. We integrated the events of the day, the reality of the colonial relationship of Puerto Rico."

Dylcia also worked as the English editor for the first bi-lingual newspaper.

Somewhere down the line when I was a newspaper editor I was asked if I believed in armed struggle and I said absolutely. When the moment came I made the decision to join the armed struggle. On April 4<sup>th</sup> 1980 I was arrested. Prior to that I was Willie Morales's compañera – William was the first member of the young FALN who was arrested. At the time of his arrest I was subpoenaed to the Grand Jury and I was two months pregnant. So by the time William was being sentenced I was about to give birth. Although the FBI were chasing me all over New York City and subpoenaing me to the Grand Jury several times I gave birth to my son, Guillerrmo Sebastian Morales Pagan who just turned 21 years of age. The biggest sacrifice I've had to do for our struggle was the separation from my son because on April 4<sup>th</sup>, the day of my arrest, he was thirteen months old and we were separated. When he was 10 years old we reunited and just last month we were able to spend our first month as mother and son in freedom and it was an interesting experience. I think we've both grown from the situation. We fought like good moms and sons.

The inevitable question for political prisoners is, "Was it worth it?" What does it take to go into a situation knowing that it could cost you decades of your life, or life itself?

I can honestly say that I have no regrets. My parents raised me to do this and I tried to instill that in my son that when you believe in something you have to be prepared to defend it. I don't see myself as a martyr. I see myself as a conscious Puerto Rican woman who made a decision in life. Like my comrades I felt that that is what had to be done at that time in history and we knew the

consequences and that's the choice we made. I believe that each of us has a different destiny in life and I made a commitment to struggle. I did almost twenty years inside like my co-defendants and my comrades. Yes there were times of a lot of pain because you are so far away from your loved ones. I also learned one major thing: how could I integrate my revolutionary self and my spiritual self? One of the main tools of survival that I developed to help myself was when I tried to take my attributes in the arts and writing and share that by creating programs for the women inside the prison.

Many times when I look at all the beauty that surrounds me now I have to think of my comrades that I left behind. Haydee, Carlos, Oscar and Juan Segarra Palmer and Camacho and Solis. Then I think constantly of Linda Evans and Marilyn Buck and Susan Rosenberg – how difficult it is for them. Our North American comrades and our New African comrades that are dwindling in prisons. The fight to save Mumia's life is essential. The situation in prison has gotten much more stringent than it's ever been. It's very important that people not forget who they are and that the same support that has been given to us has to remain for the Puerto Ricans that are still inside.

Right now in Puerto Rico it is the most incredible moment of history and I believe we are at the pinnacle of the history of Puerto Rico with the situation of Viequez. We have shown them how determined we are to get them out of our sister island of Viequez – to be an activist requires consciousness and hard work and daily commitment to the struggle.

interview by Priscilla Arnold





# RAFA

## A LIFE EN LA LUCHA

interview by Ernesto J Vigoreaux

RAFAel Cancel Miranda lives and breathes the Puerto Rican revolution. He is the embodiment of the "valor and sacrifice" that has freed the minds and spirits of many Puerto Ricans and will one day free their bodies as well. RAFA first saw the inside of a U.S. prison cell as a young man when he refused to be drafted into the occupying army of the United States. As a member of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, he and three other Nationalists armed commandos attacked the U.S. house of congress in 1954 as a symbolic act of protest against the U.S. colonial occupation of Puerto Rico. To this day, RAFA remains entrenched in the Puerto Rican struggle for liberation.

-Not4Prophet

**For me personally, it all started on March 21, 1937, when I was a six year old child. This is when I first became conscious. On that day the North American government ordered that my people be massacred in Ponce.**

**I'd like to start with some historical dates to learn about what influenced you to become the independentista that you are today?**

Starting from the beginning, as we say, it's all a product of an invasion carried out against us by the North American navy on July 25, 1898. Prior to July 25th, The North American Navy had already begun their attack on our island, killing Puerto Ricans and destroying our homes. Then on July 25th, they culminated their attack by taking complete possession of our nation through force and violence. So here is where this American nightmare started for the Puerto Rican people. With the invasion of 1898.

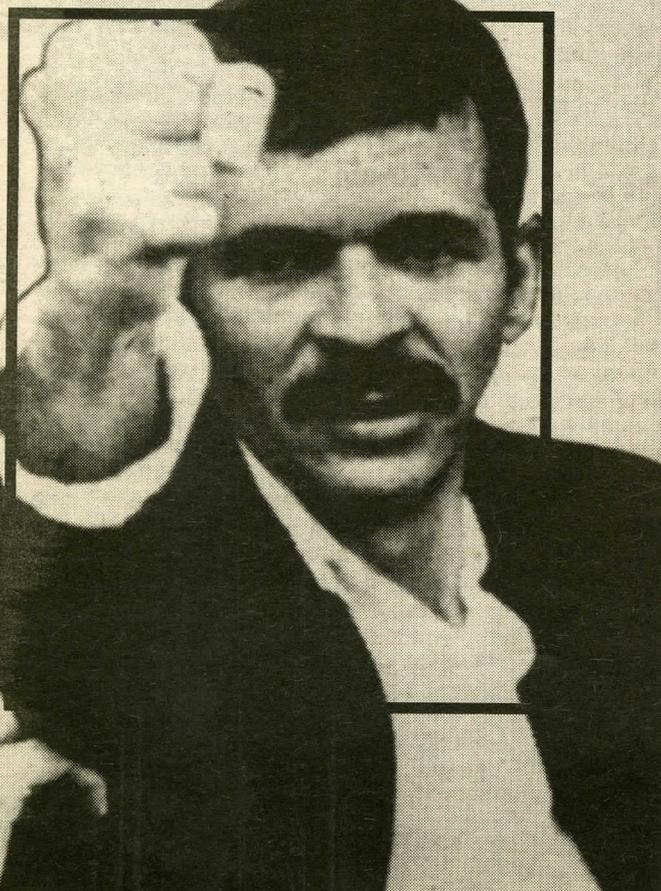
**Could you tell us a little about the influences in your childhood that motivated you to struggle against U.S. colonialism?**

For me personally, it all started on March 21, 1937, when I was a six year old child. This is when I first became conscious. On that day the North American government ordered that my people be massacred in Ponce. That day there was a peaceful demonstration for the release of Pedro Albizu Campos, Juan Antonio Corretjer, Clemente Soto Velez, and other Puerto Rican patriots who the North American government had imprisoned for struggling for independence. The anti-independence forces shot and killed in cold blood these Puerto Ricans who were demonstrating peacefully.

It happened that my parents were there. My mother who left to attend the march dressed in white returned dressed in red, because in order to escape she had to drag herself on top of those who had been killed. She was wearing their blood. So this was perhaps the first act on the part of the enemy that had a lasting impact on me.

**As a child, did you understand the colonial nature of Puerto Rico's relationship with the U.S.?**

I remember that a few days after the Ponce Massacre they demanded that the Puerto Rican children in the schools swear loyalty to the North American flag; as they had now begun a massive campaign to indoctrinate us Puerto Ricans from childhood on, to instill false loyalties in us. They tried to instill loyalty to those who invaded us by forcing us to swear allegiance to their flag. I refused and they expelled me from the classroom, and from then on through my life they kept on expelling me because I never swore loyalty to the flag that represented the murderers of my people, of my family. This is when my personal struggle as a Puerto Rican began; when I became conscious. At first



would prefer to embrace than fight, but if someone attacks my people, that gives me the right to fight back.



Andres Figueroa, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Lolita Lebron and Irving Flores arrested March 1, 1954

I didn't know exactly what it all meant and why our situation was this way, but with the years I found out why it was, what interests there were behind it all, and why they would stop at nothing to maintain those interests.

**And your awakening continued from there?**

Yes. After 1937 I had different experiences where I began to more clearly recognize the colonial condition of Puerto Rico; exactly what the colonial situation was. I began to understand the reasons why we were being persecuted for simply fighting for what is rightfully ours: OUR nation. And as I learned, I became more and more involved in the struggle. We began to organize committees of Nationalist youth in my home town, Mayaguez. We had radio programs, put out magazines, and spoke to people in the street. In 1946 they expelled me for a year from high school because they wanted us to learn everything in English in the hope that this would strip us of our cultural personality and identity. The colonial powers understood that language is part of the spirit of a person, and if they can strip you of your spirit, then they can more easily strip you of everything else. So to counter this, we students went on strike, and it was said that I was the organizer. After this, I left Mayaguez and went to study at San Juan. So I lost a year of school, but I actually gained more, because whenever you fight dishonor, you never lose.

**Could you tell us a little about what happened when the North American army wanted to recruit you?**

When I was still in school, four FBI agents arrested me because I refused to be part of the North American army. Can you imagine serving a gang of thugs who invade your home, who assault your family; and you join this gang to fight against other peoples and families who never did anything against you?

**Which war did they want you to fight in?**

The so-called Korean war. They gave me two years and a day in a U.S. prison for refusing to go to Korea to fight their war. Their court, their judges, they themselves who had invaded us, were accusing me. The same court which they call "federal", but which is actually a foreign court in our national territory.

**So you gave up two years of your life because you didn't go to serve in the US army and go to fight against the Koreans ...**

Who hadn't done anything to us! To go and fight against Koreans, when the ones who invaded our land were the North American navy led by a man called Nelson A. Miles.

**Can you tell us a little about him?**

Nelson Miles was the same disgraceful U.S. military general who commanded the troops who murdered the Native American children, the "Indian" families in the massacre of Wounded Knee. He was the one who directed this murder, and this same general is the one they sent here to bring "democracy" to Puerto Rico. The one who's claim to fame was the murder of Indians.

**After completing your sentence in a U.S. prison, where did you return to?**

I got out in 1951 and returned to Puerto Rico. But because there were threats that I might be imprisoned again if I remained in Puerto Rico, I went to Cuba that same year. I remained in Cuba for fourteen months until Batista imprisoned me and then ultimately had me deported. So in 1952, Batista's police put me on a plane and sent me back to Puerto Rico where I was once again imprisoned for my "nationalist activities". That was the last time that I saw the great Puerto Rican revolutionary Pedro Albizu Campos. In "La Princesa" jail.

**What were the circumstances leading up to the commando attack on the U.S. house of Congress?**



After leaving prison, I went to New York to participate in the United Nations, lobbying for Puerto Rico's independence. You see, until 1953 Puerto Rico was on the United Nation's list of dependent territories, colonial territories. There was a committee for non-independent territories and since Puerto Rico was on this list, the North American government had to provide a report on Puerto Rico every year to this committee. The U.S. government didn't want to continue doing this because they did not want to admit that they still held a colony in their possession, so they changed the status of Puerto Rico to the fraud we now know as the "commonwealth" or the State of Free Association in 1952, claiming that Puerto Rico had made a sovereign decision to accept this status, and therefore we were no longer a colony. We Nationalists who were involved in this UN lobbying said that this was nothing more than a fraud. That it was a lie because Puerto Rico is a country under military occupation. Puerto Rico is a country that is controlled socially, politically, and economically by the U.S.. They control the communications media. They even control the mentality of thousands of Puerto Ricans. They had then and they have now all the agencies of repression in Puerto Rico.

**Was this done through "legal" electoral channels?**

No country could have either a plebiscite, a referendum, or any kind of free vote under these circumstances. No country in the world would recognize any kind of election held in a country under military occupation. It's interesting, that's exactly what Hitler did when he invaded Europe. He held plebiscites in these occupied territories to give the appearance of legality to something illegal. It was his attempt to legalize the crime. So we Nationalists said that this was a fraud, but eventually the United States achieved a "triumph" in a UN vote of 18 to 22, where many countries abstained because they took into consideration that the United States had all the power. Through military and economic power they converted many so-called free nations into puppet nations who would support colonialism. So Puerto Rico was now presented to the world as a nation of "satisfied slaves".

**So now Puerto Rico was officially no longer a colony of the United States, but instead a "commonwealth"?**

It was as if a politician there in the North American congress passed a law saying that we are now dogs, and we start to bark because they

**I have never regretted anything that I've done in support of the Puerto Rican liberation struggle. I live for the Puerto Rican revolution.**

have told us we are dogs.

**So this was when you left for Washington DC?**

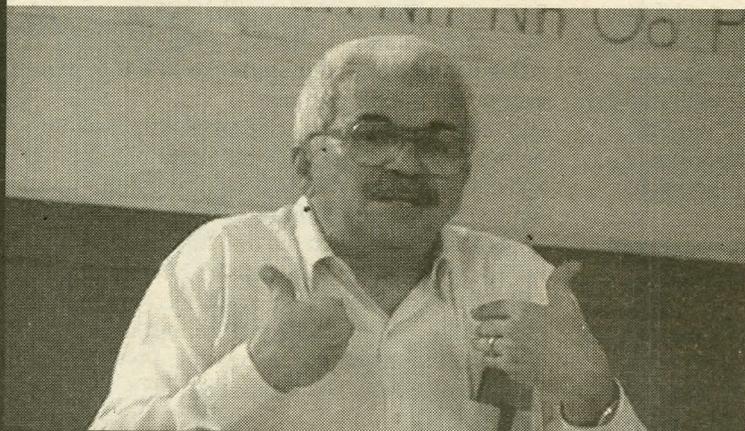
On the first of March 1954 we visited Washington DC. There were a thousand reasons to go: all the outrages and injustices they've committed. They completely control, oppress and exploit our national territory. They have used our young Puerto Rican men and women for their wars, in Europe, the Far East. Thousands of young people have died in wars that aren't of our making. We are the tombstones they put up because they use Puerto Ricans as cannon fodder to protect North American interest. Till this day, they even use us against ourselves, against Black people and Mexican people and Native American people. They used us against our own brothers in Santo Domingo, against our brothers in Panama. As a colonized nation they use us against our own people every day in a million different ways. And so if there is anything that Puerto Rico has always had, it's the right to respond in whatever way is necessary, by any means necessary.

**Which leads us to your thoughts on the question of violence.**

Many times when people talk about violence, they talk about the violence of people that defend themselves, but never talk about the violence of the powers that shoot, and kill, drop bombs, and destroy entire villages, entire nations. This is unjust violence. So I do not repent for having engaged in revolutionary violence, for having fired shots, because many more shots have been fired at my people. I would prefer to embrace than fight, but if someone attacks my people, that gives me the right to fight back. They deploy soldiers, entire armies, to hurt people who have done nothing – and this is not unjust violence? Absurd! But this violence no one criticizes. The U.S. Navy is not violent and is committing no violence? Why do they criticize a people who defend themselves, but don't criticize the oppressors? The fact is, I love my nation, my people, and from true love sometimes comes revolutionary violence. I am proud that I had enough love within me to do what I had to do.

**You spent two years in prison for refusing to be drafted into the U.S. military, and another long twenty-five years for the attack on the U.S. house of congress. After giving up so many years of your life in U.S. prisons, do you feel it's been worth the price?**

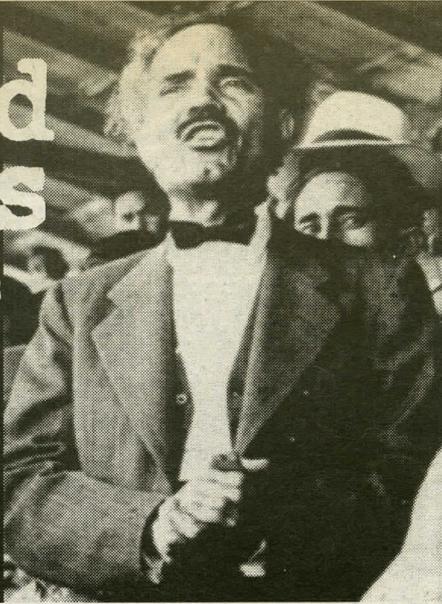
Ah, yes, yes, I have said this a million times. I hate prison, everything about prison life. But for me it definitely was worth the sacrifice. I spent a few years in prison, but Puerto Ricans have been in a colonial prison for centuries. I have never regretted anything that I've done in support of the Puerto Rican liberation struggle. I live for the Puerto Rican revolution. I feel proud that I have always had the inclination to sacrifice my entire life for my people.



# To Defend Vieques

by Pedro Albizu Campos

translation by Aracely Santana



This article was written in 1948 by Pedro Albizu Campos, revolutionary leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party.

In Vieques the government of the United States is carrying out the dismemberment of our nation. Vieques is dying. It is becoming extinct in the face of the cold, deliberate and intentional attack from the U.S. government. Vieques was always a genuinely Puerto Rican community. There remained alive the Puerto Rico of our childhood. There was found a healthy, strong, happy population of beautiful, refined and hospitable men and women who were united in a big family. Vieques, in possession of all its natural resources, supported its population with its own agricultural and livestock resources, by growing food and sugar products, all of which totaled more than 2,000 tons annually.

Why has the United States chosen Vieques as the sight for the manifest recreation, before contemporary civilization, of the crime of genocide, that is, the deliberate physical or cultural destruction of a nationality? The explanation can be found in the public hearings on the Tydings project, which were carried out by the U.S. Senate Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs in March 1945.

Captain Parks, from the U.S. Fleet, appeared before the Committee in the name of, and as a representative of, the Chief of Naval Operations. Here we include the statement made by Officer Parks from the record published by the U.S. Senate: "The interest of the chief of Naval Operations on this plan to grant Puerto Rico its independence stems solely from the concern with national security. Given its position and size, Puerto Rico has a strategic value as a base of naval operations. During the early days of the present war, the Navy expanded its holdings in Puerto Rico and built many new installations... During peace times, the installations will be used to maintain and support the training of the designated force which will be established in the Caribbean. In future wars, we want to be ready to expand these naval installations in Puerto Rico so they can provide the necessary support to as large a fleet as needed, which may serve as a barrier to any threat, whether from the south or the east. The size of the desired expansion will depend on the type and magnitude of the threat being confronted. The number and type of installations needed by the navy in Puerto Rico in the future cannot be foreseen at this point. For this reason, the Chief of Naval Operations is opposed to any plan to grant independence to Puerto Rico... The United States has to be the only judge of its own future military requirements in this zone."

**The time comes  
when justice  
arms the weak  
and puts the  
giants to  
flight.**

The United States has declared the entire national territory of Puerto Rico as a strategic zone. This position has been expressed clearly and definitively by the representatives of the U.S. Navy. Hence, if the United States judges it necessary to destroy any municipality in Puerto Rico, thereby throwing its population to the vicissitudes of a forceful exile, or if the United States decides that all Puerto Ricans have to be forced into exile, thereby eliminating our nationality from our national territory, then the United States will do this while remaining, all along, as "the only judge" on this question and disregarding completely the right of the Puerto Rican nation.

The United States believes that any time the country considers it necessary, it has the right to drive away the entire population of San Juan, of Ponce, of Mayaguez, of any other city in Puerto Rico, or all the Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rican soil. And this is not a theoretical situation since the military, naval and air bases have already been established all over the national territory from the island of Mona to Vieques and from San Juan to Ponce. The government on each one of these bases will fall under the jurisdiction of the corresponding bureau of the U.S. government. If it is an air base, it will fall under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Aviation; if it is a naval base, it will fall under the Secretary of the Navy; if it is a military base, it will fall under the Secretary of War, under the joint general leadership of the U.S. Defense Secretary. Nobody will be able to enter into these zones.

This process of mutilation of the Puerto Rican nationality is being carried out coldly and systematically in order to lead us to a total destruction and to deprive us from the exercise of our right within the boundaries of our own national territory.

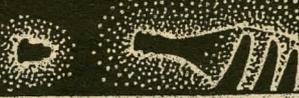
The community of Vieques realizes that the Municipal Administration dares to say not even a word in the face of that brutal aggression; furthermore, the administration has failed even to take a resolution, either in support or against its demise as a municipality. The representatives of the President of the United States here, that is, the governor, is fulfilling his duty as a North American, as the consul who represents his government, the government of the United States. His duty is to carry out the disappearance of the community of Vieques, and along with that, the destruction of our Puerto Rican nationality.



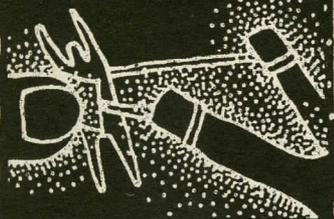
1918: The U.S. Supreme Court declares Puerto Rico an unincorporated territory belonging to but not forming part of the United States. Jose de Diego dies.



1932: The Coalition of Pro-statehood Republicans, sectors of the Socialist Party and sectors of the Unionist Party led by Santiago Igleseians win the insular elections.



1922: The Unionist Party eliminates from the party their leader, Antonio Barcelo, and under the leadership of Jose Coll Y Cuchi found the Puerto Rican Nationalist party.



1933: Cane Workers at The South Porto Rico Sugar Company go on strike. They are joined in early 1934 by workers of the Farjardo Sugar Company and Central Aguyrre Associates.



1923: First radio station is established in Puerto Rico.



1935: National Militants are killed by police at the University of Puerto Rico.



1924: Santiago Iglesias leads the Socialist Party (the Coalicion) with the Republican Party (the party of the rich).

1936: The Chief of the Insular Police, Colonel Francis Riggs, is killed by two young Nationalists. Albizu Campos and several other young Nationalists are arrested and tried for sedition. Albizu Campos is sentenced to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, GA. Senator Tydings introduces the bill named after him that offers Puerto Rico its independence.

1928: San Felipe hurricane hits Puerto Rico.

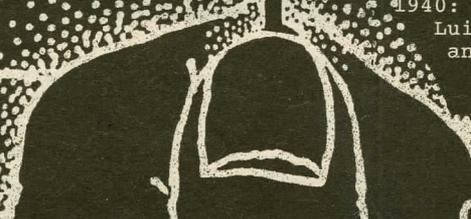
1929: The Depression hits Puerto Rico, by 1930, 36% of the employable on the island were unemployed.

1939: Santiago Iglesias dies.

1930: Pedro Albizu Campos is elected president of the Nationalist Party.

1940: The Popular Democratic Party of Luis Munoz Marin wins a surprising and impressive electoral victory. Munoz Marin becomes president of the Insular Senate.

1931: Luis Munoz Marin returns to Puerto Rico after living for many years in the U.S.



1941: Rexford Guy Tugwell is named the last North American Governor of P.R.

### TAP ROOTS: Betances

Ramon Emeterio Betances was born to a Puerto Rican father and a Dominican mother in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, on April 8 1827. In 1855, he traveled to Paris, where he received his medical degree. Upon his return he founded a hospital and worked to save Puerto Ricans from a cholera epidemic that ravaged the island. That same year, he organized a clandestine group dedicated to the abolition of slavery. For his political dissent, Betances was forced out of Puerto Rico by the Spanish government and fled to the Dominican Republic. In exile, he formed The Revolutionary Committee of Puerto Rico and began organizing the armed rebellion of September 23, 1868 that would come to be known as El Grito De Lares. Although this revolt failed in its attempt to liberate his homeland, it led to the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico, and came to symbolize the birth of the revolutionary struggle against colonialism in Puerto Rico.





1944: The Popular Democratic party wins the election with 383,000 votes, compared to 208,000 of the combined opposition.

1947: The Insular Legislative adopts the Industrial Incentives Act; Operation Bootstrap goes into effect. The goal is to attract foreign capital to the island. Albizu Campos returns to Puerto Rico after serving a ten year prison term. President Truman signs the Crawford-Butler act, permitting Puerto Ricans to elect their governor.

1948: Students at the University of Puerto Rico go on strike. The Popular Democratic Party wins the election, with 392,000 votes against 346,000. Luis Munoz Martin becomes the first elected governor in the history of Puerto Rico. The Catholic University of Ponce is founded.



1950: In July president Truman signs public law 600 permitting Puerto Rico to draft its own constitution within a colonial framework. In October a Nationalist revolt explodes in several parts of the island. Nationalist attack La Fortaleza in San Juan. On the mainland Nationalist try to kill Truman. In Puerto Rico the National Guard is mobilized to crush the revolt. Albizu Campos is arrested and once again sent to prison.

1951: A plebiscite approves law 600 by 75% of the votes cast. Soon thereafter 92 delegates (the majority populares) are elected to a constituent convention to draw up the constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or Associated Free State.

1952: On March 3, with 375,000 to 83,000 votes the constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is approved.

1954: On March 1, Four Nationalist open fire in the U.S. House of Representatives wounding five congressmen.

1955: The Instituto de Cultura Puertorriquena is established.

1956: The Popular Democratic Party wins 62% of the total vote. The Statehood Republican Party doubles its 1952 total with 172,000 votes; the P.I.P. drops to 85,000. The Federacion Universitaria Pro-Independencia (FUPI) is established.

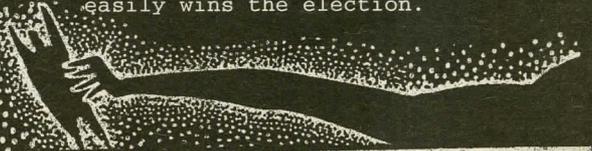
1959: The U.S. Congress rejects the Fernos-Murray Bill which amplifies Puerto Rico's autonomy. The Movimiento Pro-Independencia (MPI) is founded.

1960: The Popular Democratic Party wins the election with 58% of the total votes cast. The FUPI launches a campaign against compulsory ROTC at the University.

1962: Munoz Marin and President Kennedy exchange letters and arrange for the creation of a joint U.S.-Puerto Rico status commission to conduct studies of the island.

1963: Cuba requests the inclusion of the Puerto Rican case in the agenda of the committee of the twenty-four "decolonization matters" of the United States.

1964: Munoz Marin retires from the governorship. His handpicked successor, Roberto Sanchez Vilella, becomes the popular democratic party candidate and easily wins the election.



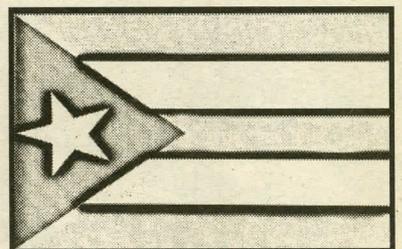
1965: Pedro Albizu Campos dies.



## TAP ROOTS: the Puerto Rican flag

The Puerto Rican flag was created in New York City on December 22, 1895, by the Puerto Rican contingent of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, an organization which advocated independence for Puerto Rico and Cuba from Spanish rule. It was intended as a symbol of Cuban/Puerto Rican solidarity and a banner of the ongoing liberation struggle.

Prior to 1952, the Puerto Rican flag was considered an outlawed rebel flag. Laws were passed to be used against any pro-independence activity, thousands of independentistas were harassed and imprisoned, and it became a crime to display the Puerto Rican flag, to write about independence, to stage pro-independence demonstrations and rallies, or to engage in any other perceived Pro-independence activity. Police would arrest anyone caught displaying the flag on charges of insubordination against the United States government. When Puerto Rico's openly colonial status was adjusted to that of a commonwealth in 1952, this once outlawed revolutionary banner became the island's official emblem, but even then, this single starred bandera could be displayed only if it was accompanied by a U.S. flag.





photographs by michael abramson from *Pa'lante*



Modeled after the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords was established by young Latinos in 1969. They took over a church in El Barrio NYC and dubbed it the People's Church, creating free breakfast and health programs and summer school programs with an emphasis on political education. The Young Lords fell victim to the government's scheme to destabilize and de-moralize radical organizations when they became more involved with the Puerto Rican independence struggle.

# THE YOUNG LORDS



**It's no use making revolution if after we make it and take state power we're as fucked-up as the people we replace. We not only have to change the political structure of this country, we've also got to change everything else. Revolution means change from the top to the bottom, and that includes the way we deal with each other as human beings.**



pictures courtesy of [www.brownberets.org](http://www.brownberets.org)



# THE BROWN BERETS

The Brown Berets began in 1967 in Los Angeles, CA. The Brown Berets organized the Eastside Blowouts, when nearly 10,000 students walked out of their schools for a week. They also set up the East Los Angeles Free Clinic, protested the deaths of Chicanos in Vietnam, and occupied land underneath the Coronado Bridge in San Diego, proclaiming it "Chicano Park." The Brown Berets were forced to disband in 1971 due to police activities and infiltration.

In 1992, the Brown Berets were reorganized throughout California. You can contact them at: 3052 Wynwood Lane – Suite 4 • Los Angeles, CA 90023 • [www.brownberets.org](http://www.brownberets.org)



**"All over the world, the people know that the streets are ours, the future is ours, man, it's all ours! All of it! And we here today will not rest until it's won and placed firmly in the hands of the people."**

# Josco Theology

It's one of the tragic jokes of history that a perverted form of Christianity has turned out to be the cruelest and most effective weapon of repression in the last two millennia. Religion *has* usually been used as an opiate for oppressed people. That's why it's so important for all people of faith – Christian or otherwise, whether you're directly involved in the Puerto Rican struggle or not – to listen to Father Luis Barrios. From the standpoint of a guy who's fighting the good fight in the South Bronx, Father Barrios sketches out the reasons why we need to combat imperialism as a sin – no matter whether it's the blatant aggression of bombing Vieques, or the subtler but more dangerous violence of "psychological colonialism." Father Barrios works with street organizations (Latin Kings/Queens, Netas and Zulu Nation) to find alternatives to violence using mediation, conflict resolution, community activism, and spiritual direction.

Spirituality is the action side of all theology, and all spirituality has social, historical, and political dimensions. On July 25<sup>th</sup> 1898, Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States by military invasion. Colonialism is an act of violence, a state of war which destroys both our personal and national identity. We Boricuas need to develop a collective resistance that decolonizes. One aspect of this liberation struggle that's being neglected and undermined is the organizing our spirituality as a way to empowerment. Our spirituality should awaken our critical consciousness to make us aware that we are a colonized and inspires us to do something about it. A radical liberation theology that organizes the social and political dimensions of our spirituality so as to lead us to struggle for personal and national liberation. This is what I call *Josco theology*.

African ancestors. If we redefine God as a God of justice, we will understand that Jesus, and the Yoruba Orishas, are paths to encounter this God.

In *Josco theology* we need to become subversives to change the injustices of this so-called world order, where the ruling class is globalizing political, social, and economic inequalities. This state of war is the reason why our spirituality should not only be anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonialist, but also remain open to accept the use of revolutionary violence when it is necessary. Why? *Because our colonizer demands that we condemn all those who use revolutionary violence as sinners.* Our spirituality should develop a critical conscience and create social movements: two fundamental requirements for any collective action that looks for change. This is of great importance, especially

## a radical Puerto Rican liberation spirituality

The *Josco* is a short story that Abelardo Diaz-Alfaro wrote about a Boricua bull that was going to be replaced and enslaved because the owners of the lands brought a North American bull. The *Josco* decided to fight for his rights and freedom. At the end, instead of submitting himself to an oppressive process of colonization, he preferred to kill himself rather than give up his dignity and integrity. He resisted to the end. This example of resistance helped me to see that we need to develop an alternative to the traditional theology that has perpetuated colonialism. The alternative is a radical decolonization theology that destroys this *psychological colonialism*—the general belief in our people that we can't survive without the United States—that creates an emotional dependency in most Puerto Ricans. Psychological colonialism helps the process of oppression by the United States, and explains why most Puerto Ricans fear a free Puerto Rico.

A radical theology that is relevant to the socio-political reality of Puerto Rico has to build on the foundation that colonialism is a sin, and that as people of God we have the responsibility to destroy this evil. It needs to recognize that in order to liberate people's mentality, a Puerto Rican national consciousness must awaken and develop into a collective resistance that will bring liberation from domination, subjugation, exploitation, and repression. Some of the sources for this radical Boricua theology are the following.

In our *Josco theology* we need to recognize the need to become God-centered. This brings harmony, and celebrates our diversity. In our Puerto Rican community a significant number of our brothers and sisters worship through the experience of the Yoruba religion, a marvelous tradition given to us by our

within the socio-economic realities of life in New York City where most of our people are victims of exploitation, marginalization, alienation, and oppression. More specifically, we need a consciousness that allows us to identify the class struggles in our neo-liberal, capitalist, patriarchal, and heterosexist economy. That way, without blaming God, we will understand social phenomena like the privatization of public services including education, health, and a prison industrial complex that systematically incarcerates poor people and people of color.

This subversive attitude needs to include demands for the release Puerto Rican Political Prisoners, who under our colonial reality are prisoners of war. It also needs to include the present struggle to get the Navy out of Vieques and the rest of Puerto Rico. Under *Josco theology* we need to become prophets and prophetesses who identify, denounce, confront and destroy all structures and institutions of power that foster injustice and oppression. Liberation is a process. In which we accept that our faith is utopian in the sense that it leads us to search for hope. As the author of the Book of Hebrew (11:1) says: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We need to have vision, because without it we perish.

We need to recognize spirituality as a resistant power for liberation. If our spirituality doesn't bring both personal and national liberation, it only adds to what we already have: a process that marginalizes, oppresses, and colonizes the people of God. This is opium. *Viva Puerto Rico libre!*

Father Luis Barrios  
Iglesia San Romero de Las Americas  
Bronx, New York

lumagazine.net



**It all started** in Havana in summer of 1997 with a flier about the Puerto Rican political prisoners that Kahlil Jacobs-Fantauzzi gave to a friend of one of the 4th grade children in my class at the Woodcrest Bruderhof school. My students have always had pen pals, so when school started, each of them picked a name and began to write. The pen pals became our teachers as they wrote to us about real history, commitment, daring, and love. As the children learned more about their pen pals and the reasons they were in prison, they wanted to become involved in the struggle to free them. Our class went to rallies for the prisoners in Washington DC and New York, so when eleven of them were released, the children knew that they had participated in that victory.

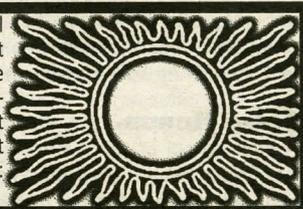
**Following are** excerpts from character sketches the children wrote about their friends.

**I thank** all you penpals for teaching my class the most important lessons they need for life.

**en resistencia y lucha**, an indebted teacher  
Marie Thomson

## from the hof

The Bruderhof is a Christian communal movement whose members try to live out Jesus' commands - to love God and the people around you - in the details of everyday life. You are welcome to visit us at the Revolution Center at the Woodcrest Bruderhof • Rifton NY 12471 • tel: 914.658.8351.



**Brenda (10)** writes to **Juan Segarra-Palmer**. He has a very big love for rainbows and nature. "Do you know the story of Noah? In it the rainbow is the covenant between God and Man. Have you seen rainbows one on top of the other? I did. It was so beautiful that everyone stopped to look them." Juan has been writing to me for a few years now, and I have been writing to him. I have learned a lot from him about nature, rainbows and lots of wildlife that is around the prison.

**Dylcia Pagán** is a brown haired Puerto Rican. I decided to write to her in prison and let her know that someone was thinking about her. She loves my letters and fills hers with her love for me.

**Kerstin (11)**

**Alberto Rodríguez's** letters tell me about interesting things. Every time I get a letter I am very happy. I hope to see him some day and talk to him. He sent me 49 letters. **Johann (11)**

**Carlos Torres** is imprisoned and cannot see his beloved Puerto Rico. Carlos is a caring, unselfish man who thinks of others. This is from a letter sent to me after some of the other Political Prisoners were released: "I am thrilled with their release. It was wonderful to see all those people who I know and love walk out of prison. I've been all caught up in the excitement and joy of the victory for all of us." He was not bitter that he was not among those freed. Carlos taught me a lot. I have learned the exciting history of Puerto Rico, to have joy in life, and I have even learned Spanish! Libertad para Carlos! **Marie Johanna (12)**

**Antonio Camacho Negrón** is a short muscular Puerto Rican who was born in Yauco. Antonio was involved in a theft of \$7.5 million from Wells Fargo in Hartford CT. He brought the money to Puerto Rico and bought toys for the poor children. In prison, Antonio teaches algebra. I have visited Antonio numerous times and have found out that he is a very educated man. **Gareth (11)**

**Lucy Rodgríguez** had a great love for everything in nature, especially animals. She wrote: "I love to be around trees, cats, dogs, ducks, birds and flowers. We have all of that here except for dogs. Cats are smaller and they fit through under the prison fences. We spoil them rotten." **Adena (11)**

**Ricardo Jiménez** has a great love for animals. Here is a part of a letter: "There is a cat who comes to my window but is two stories down and looks around the area till I throw it some food." Ricardo taught me lots. On 12/3/99 I was lucky enough to meet him in Philly after he was released. **Nigel (11)**

**Haydée Beltran** taught me to treasure even a letter as a gift from a family member or friend. She is very good in expressing her kindness and love in her letters. She also taught me more Spanish. She always wanted me to have fun and stay happy and to keep a smile in my heart for her. I enjoy writing to her and I hope our friendship will last. **Heidi (11)**

**Oscar López Rivera** is a Puerto Rican with gray hair, dark skin and a short pony tail. He looks like an ordinary man but he is not. When I wrote to him that I was upset because he wasn't released with the other prisoners, he wrote, "Your prayers, your hopes and your solidarity make me feel happy, but you should not feel sad because I am still in prison. The fact that 11 compañeros are out should make our hearts palpitate with joy. I hope you get to meet them and then you will not feel sad any more." Writing and sharing experiences with Oscar have taught me love, courage, daring, compassion and forgiveness.

En Resistencia y Lucha!

**Lisi (10)**

**Tarisa (12)** writes to **Carmen Valentín**.

From letters that I have gotten, I can tell that she has a great love to animals. Here is something she wrote. "I can never keep a bird in a cage because it is just like putting a human being in a prison." She knows how they feel.

**Jeremy (11)** says of his friend **Luis Rosa**: Luis loves people and enjoys getting letters. He loves animals, especially horses, and likes to play baseball. Luis has taught me a lot of wise and wonderful sayings. I enjoy writing to him.

**Jose Solis** is the kind of man you would like to meet. I learned from him that you should never lose courage and you should always fight for what is right! He wrote to me: "Throughout this horrible ordeal I learned something wonderful about myself and that is that even though me, my family and our people have been extremely hurt by all this, I am not capable of hatred. Hatred destroys, love builds, and I know you know love just because you wrote me. God bless you my friend." **Travis (11)**

**Susanna (12)** says of **Alicia Rodríguez**: From her letters and phone calls I can tell that she loves all animals especially cats, since there were lots in the prison. In almost every letter she writes about the cats. I learned a lot about Puerto Rico and about people who were incarcerated because of protesting unjust conditions in Puerto Rico and spreading the truth!

**Adolfo Matos** was born in Puerto Rico. One of the things that Adolfo enjoys is kids. He had two daughters when he was arrested and he loved them dearly. **Arlo (11)**

**Cynthia (12)** says about **Edwin Cortés**: From his letters I learned a lot about prison life. When he writes "I really appreciate your friendship and support" he really means it, he is a friend who has experienced a lot and can tell me the truth about his country Puerto Rico.

**Estella (11)** writes to **Elizam Escobar**. From our correspondence we have connected a life long link of love. "What justifies the struggle for independence is not the popularity but whether you are right or not. For self respect we should take our destiny in our own hands."



# tiócfáidh ár lá OUR DAY WILL COME

**“The problem with our children is they are so full of self-hate but they don’t know it, you see. We’ve been colonized for so long, so many hundreds of years really, and the young folk grow up brainwashed, like. They look to Europe to find out what’s good, instead of looking at their own culture.”**

**Who said this?** Malcolm X? Ché? Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos? The words could describe Puerto Rico, but the flavor does not. They were spoken by an old man named Patrick Connor in 1997, late one night in a town called Santry, just outside Dublin. They were spoken about Ireland.

**I’m Jesse Mumm.** I am one of the American Irish, yet I teach high school at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center of Chicago. I have always seen the Puerto Ricans around me with Irish eyes, but in Ireland I had saw my neighborhood all over again. I had the great good fortune of returning home, as my cousins say, to my native land, a land god made mad: all her wars are happy, all her songs are sad.

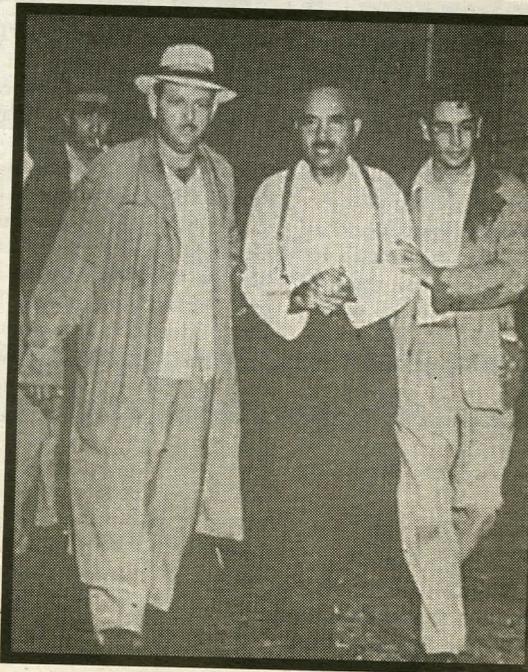
**Eire, or sometimes Erin,** is the island’s name in our original language, just as Puerto Ricans keep alive the name Borikén. In Puerto Rico, massive opposition defeated the United States when it tried to make English the official language. People understand that language is at the very center of identity. The Irish were not so fortunate 300 years ago, and many, many tongues were literally cut off for daring to speak Irish to British officials.

**Puerto Rico** is a colony of the United States, which calls it a commonwealth. In the struggle to resolve this status/contradiction, some people push for US statehood, and others seek real independence. Ireland is a nation that got both. Six counties in the northeast officially belong to the United Kingdom of Britain. They use British money and laws and elect people to the British Parliament. The remaining 26 counties form the Republic of Ireland, an independent nation. Plenty of the Irish never say “Northern Ireland” because the border is a British creation.

**Over the past** thirty years over 4000 people have died in an ongoing war known in Ireland simply as “The Troubles.” On the one side the largely Catholic Irish resistance is led by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the political wing of the IRA, known as Sinn Féin. (Say it like “shin fain.”) On the other side stands the British army, backed up by Protestant paramilitary groups loyal to England. The war takes on a religious character, since the British made it illegal to be Catholic in Ireland for hundreds of years. But anyone who thinks this is a religious war is just not looking at Irish history.

**The British first** came to take us over in the year 1152. After 845 years of resistance, there is a tremendous weariness about the armed struggle. As people try to be humanistic about an inhuman situation, contradiction takes its natural place in the heart. No one I met spoke well of the British. Everyone knows what they’ve done.

**You have to** understand that Ireland was depopulated. There are now six million people living on an island ten times the size of Puerto Rico, which holds four million. Where did the rest go? There are 100 million people of Irish descent living wherever else the British put them – England itself, Australia, Argentina, Latin America, Canada, and the United States. There are more people of Irish descent in the Chicago area than in either Dublin and Belfast. Names like



**When Irish revolutionary leader of Sinn Féin, Eamon de Valera, came to Harvard in 1920 to build support for the Irish liberation struggle**

Soliván (from Sullivan), Ocasio (from O’Casey), and Oniel (from O’Neill) remain in Puerto Rico from Irish families who became part of the mestizaje. These people did not want to go. It became common custom to hold a wake – the traditional Irish funeral gathering – for those departing, who were known as the “lost ones.” Contrary to the usual immigration myths, leaving Ireland was seen as a kind of death, brought on by the threat of death. The Irish were starved, bribed, evicted, deceived, or even forced at gunpoint to leave the country.

**The British knew** exactly what they were doing. In those days colonialism was much more honest – and stupider. England used Ireland to practice the imperialism it finally took to the rest of the world, but in doing so it made every conceivable mistake. By trying to outlaw everything from language to religion to assembly to self-rule, they helped to create the culture of resistance which eventually moved the war to England, where frequent IRA attacks and threats have all but shut down British transportation. To justify the ongoing invasion, the British were the first to use the term “white people,” meaning themselves. The Irish were the first people to be called “black” by Europeans, meaning evil or savage. Then it’s easier to kill them. The Clancy Brothers explain the racist British perception, its mythology, and their love for Mother England, in the traditional satire:

Now when we were savage, fierce and wild,  
She came like a mother to her child,  
Gently raised us from the slime,  
And kept our hands from hellish crime,  
And she sent us to heaven in her own good time.

**But when** outright war doesn’t work, there are other ways to depopulate an island. Look again at Puerto Rico. The US shipped out Puerto Rican workers, often lying about their destinations, and secretly sterilized thousands of Puerto Rican women. The British simply relied on starvation. Each of these campaigns is buried under historical lies and a media blackout. This is why Ireland today is a battleground not just be-

# ya nos llegará el día OUR DAY WILL COME

tween IRA and the British government. It is also waging the most crucial struggle – coming to terms with its history.

**Official history** for years stated that during something called the Irish Potato Famine of 1847-1850 one third of the Irish people died, one third emigrated, and one third remained. It is true that a disease rotted most of Ireland's potatoes for about four years, but the same blight hit England and parts of France and Germany. So why did we have a Famine? The Irish had to eat potatoes because the vast majority of Irish food – the bread, beef, pork, butter, milk, eggs, and porter – went to England. During the Famine 100,000 British troops were mobilized to guard and remove that food, escort the ships, and protect the landlords. You don't usually read that. In this time massive rebellions were crushed with bullets and bayonets, while members of the British Parliament lamented

sible keep mothers from children, family from family, block roads, cut phone wires.

**The next step is** to CRIMINALIZE the national liberation struggle. This is done first by keeping up a massive denial that it exists. Refuse to recognize political prisoner status. Blackout their stories. Change "hero" to "hit man," and "revolutionary" to "ringleader."

**Finally, it is crucial** to DEMORALIZE prisoners, leaders, and the communities of support. Defeat cultural programs by placing informants to create internal conflict. Breed personal confusion. Above all, try to break the back of the movement by using torture, isolation, deprivation, and lies against the political prisoners.

**The same kinds** of "legal" sensory deprivation techniques and psychological torture being used right now in this country against Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican POW, were taught to his jailers by British intelligence forces. They deliberately experimented on the Irish, and meticulously taught these skills to our government so they could use them on Puerto Ricans. "There are no political prisoners" – the same tune they play from Washington to the halls of Stormont.

**In the United States,** the Irish faced the most bizarre historical contradiction, going from the most violent oppression to the most profitable form of privilege. By the second

or third generation, the majority of Irish chose graduation to the white race, despite being treated as "white n\*\*\*\*\*s" upon arrival.

**Do the American Irish** really understand that? With several generations of serious money and power behind them, we still retain a legacy of the values and habits of their forebears, including at times a ghetto mentality. We don't see beyond our families, our neighborhoods, our territory – what we got. We end up living out the worst nightmare of our historical experience, in the form of racist cops, judges, businesspeople, and politicians. Do we recognize our historical brotherhood in struggle with Puerto Ricans?

**The American Irish** need to wake up and live out the commandments of their history, show some respect to the bodies of their slain and starved ancestors, and use that memory to subvert a racist power structure that grants them privilege in exchange for betraying who they are and swallowing the amnesia of whiteness.

**I love Ireland** and I love my people, but Chicago is home, and Chicago's problems are my problems. Let the awakening come to Eire, where I know tiócfáidh ár lá (our day will come). In another bright day to come to this country, which is yet to be a nation, the American Irish have a history written in their blood, and a choice to live it or not.

he met with a young student who was appointed to preside over the campaign in favor of Irish independence, Pedro Albizu Campos.



publicly that the genocide was not complete enough to empty the land for resettlement. According to new research based on England's own records of its policies, the real death toll is more likely near four million. This is why conscious Irish teachers and cultural workers are trying to eliminate the term "Potato Famine." It wasn't about potatoes. The Irish Holocaust, or simply An Gorta Mór, (The Great Hunger) was about colonialism. It's not in the textbooks, so you have to read that on neighborhood murals in Belfast.

**Irish and Puerto Rican** Nationalists have understood their connection for at least a hundred years. After the US invasion, the actions and writings of Charles Parnell and Wolfe Tone, among others, helped to inspire the beginning Puerto Rican nationalist movement. El Maestro, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, joined the Irish student organization at Harvard at a time when the IRA absolutely depended on overseas support. The Irish felt an incredible debt to this man who helped organize some of the very first Irish Republican solidarity meetings in New York, before there was even an Irish Free State. And when the Irish Constitution was written, the framers again called on Albizu. Ever after, political prisoners in each struggle have communicated and shared words of support.

**But the connection** is not only forged by a common legacy of resistance. The oppressed might support each other, but the oppressors cooperate too. Ever since the 1960s when liberation struggles swept the world, the established powers have devoted immense time and energy to figuring out how to control and neutralize oppressed populations. The same surveillance and incarceration techniques, the blueprint of counterinsurgency developed in England by Frank Kitson and Robin Everleigh, has been studied by the US Bureau of Prisons.

**The idea is** to ISOLATE people from each other, towns from towns, communities from communities. Raid and attack cultural institutions, schools, and community centers, to cut lines of communication and dialogue. Keep political prisoners in isolation. Shut down the radical press. Wherever pos-



1967: In a referendum on political status, the Commonwealth Concept receives a majority of votes, against statehood and independence. The C.A.L. (Commandos of Armed Liberation) is organized.

1968: A rift in the Popular Democratic Party causes Sanchez Vilella to leave the party. He forms his own People's Party. Luis Negrón López is the Popular Democratic candidate. Luis A. Ferré and the Pro-Statehood New Progressive Party (the heir of the old republican party) wins by a narrow margin, interrupting 28 years of Popular Democratic rule.

1970: Governor Ferré and President Nixon agree on the formation of an ad hoc committee to discuss Ferré's request that Puerto Ricans be allowed to participate in presidential elections. Muñoz Marín retires from the senate.

1971: The MPI changes its name to Puerto Rican Socialist Party and adopts marxism-leninism as its ideology.

1972: Rafael Hernández Colón of the Popular Democratic Party is elected Governor of Puerto Rico. The Popular Democratic Party receive 100,000 more votes than the New Progressive Party of Ferré.

1973: Waves of workers' strikes hit the island. The National Guard is mobilized to run certain enterprises paralyzed by these strikes. At an

assembly students at the University of Puerto Rico vote to strike for changes at the University. The University is forced to close.

1978: Los Macheteros announces its existence by taking credit for an attack on two Puerto Rican police officers. The attack is in retaliation for the murder of two Independentistas at the Cerro Maravilla.

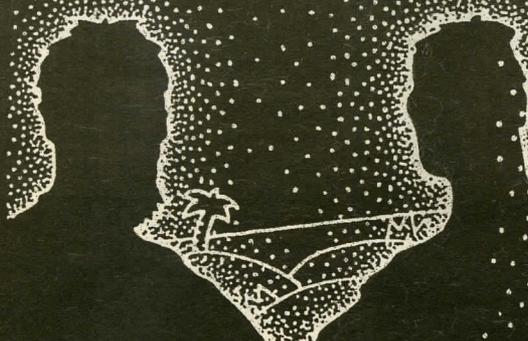
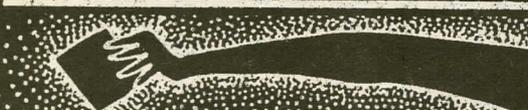
1979: Macheteros participate, along with the other revolutionary groups, in a series of eight bomb attacks against the United States Government facilities located in Puerto Rico.

1979: Along with FARP, the volunteers and the FALN, Los Macheteros announce that all the groups are working together and that they "will fight until final victory is achieved over imperialism and traitors who serve it."

1981: Los Macheteros take credit for a Wells Fargo robbery in Santurce. The total amount taken is \$ 348,000.

1982: because of 350 squatter families were forcibly evicted by the Puerto Rican police from villa sin miedo in Carolina, los macheteros fire on the police, killing one officer and injuring twelve.

1983: The group successfully takes \$ 7.1 million from a Wells Fargo Depot in West Hartford, CT. This is the first incident outside Puerto Rico.



the words to this song were changed in the 1950s. here are the original revolutionary lyrics, written by Lola Rodríguez de Tío.

## LA BORINQUEÑA

Despierta, borinqueño  
que han dado la senill  
Despierta de ese sueño  
que es hora de luchar!

A ese llamar patriótico  
no arde tu corazón?  
Ven! Nos será simpático  
el ruido del canon.

Mira, ya el cubano  
libre será;  
le dará el machete  
su libertad...  
le dará el machete  
su libertad.

Ya el tambor guerrero  
dice en su son,  
que es la manigua el sitio,  
el sitio de la reunión,  
de la reunión...  
de la reunión.

El Grito de Lares  
se ha de repetir,  
y entonces sabremos  
vencer o morir.

Bellísima Borinquen,  
a Cuba hay que seguir;  
tu tienes bravos hijos  
que quieren combatir.

1985: 1250 FBI Agents and US Marshals carried out a major military operation against the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. The FBI made over forty searches in one morning, seizing all documents of the lawyers, writers, scholars, editors, poets, photographers, artists, reporters, etc. A total of eleven people were arrested, charged with ridiculous felonies, such as conspiracy to overthrow the united states government. All denied of bail because of arbitrary and vague definitions. The government has used the Preventative Detention Act of 1984 (also known as "the bail reform act") and part of the Reagan Administration's war on terrorism.



1985: Los Macheteros fire a rocket at the United States Courthouse in old San Juan. This action was a joint operation with organization of volunteers. "in memory of the late Juan Antonio Corretjer, who spent his life fighting yankee imperialism."

1986: Los Macheteros claim credit for two bomb blasts directed at military instalments on Puerto Rico. The aim of the bombing was to protest the possible training of Nicaraguan Contras on Puerto Rican soil and the beginning of commercial logging in El Yunque, the Puerto Rican national rain forest.

1989: President George Bush unexpectedly announced in his inaugural address that he favored statehood. "Puerto Rico is important to us not only for its strategic location, but also for the tremendous training capability which cannot be duplicated on the east coast," Brigadier General M. J. Byron testified in the Senate hearings.

1990: U.S. Congress study declares that Puerto Rico would be better off economically if it were an independent nation, but goes on to state that "this would not be in the best interest of the U.S. at this time."

Mass demonstrations take place throughout P.R. to protest sale of Puerto Rican-owned companies.

1991: Puerto Rico declares Spanish official language.

1993: Pro-statehood PR Governor declares English and Spanish the official languages of PR causing mass protests throughout the island.

1997: NATO ships invade civilian waters in Vieques, fishermen and women lead community in violent confrontation against U.S. Military.

Pro-statehood PR Governor and U.S. Secretary of State visit PR University to discuss continued sale of PR owned companies. Student protests cause government to call out riot police to suppress resistance.

1998: 100,000 Puerto Ricans mobilize to protest sale of PR telephone company, causing mass shutdown of government agencies and schools. In support of strikes, Macheteros place explosive in banks. Police riot squads called out to suppress resistance.

Thousands mobilize to commemorate 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of U.S. Invasion of Puerto Rico.

1999: The Macheteros send communique to U.S. President demanding that us cease military war games and bombing exercises in Vieques.

U.S. Military jet fighters "accidentally" drop explosives on civilians, killing one Puerto Rican and injuring four others.

University professor, accused of being a member of the Boriquen Revolutionary Front, charged with bombing of a U.S. Military recruiting station in Chicago.

Over six-hundred Puerto Ricans storm U.S. naval base in Vieques and set up "liberated zones"

11 of the Puerto Rican political prisoners were released...y la lucha continua...

ya por mas tiempo impávido  
no podemos estar,  
ya no queremos, tímidos  
dejarnos subyugar.

Nosotros queremos  
ser libre ya,  
y nuestro machete  
afilado esta..

y nuestro machete  
afilado esta.  
Por que entonces, nosotros  
hemos de estar,  
tan dormidos y sordos  
y sordos a esa señal?  
a esa señal, a esa señal?

No hay que temer, riquenos  
al ruido del canon,  
que salvar a la patria  
es deber del corazón!

ya no queremos déspotas,  
caiga el tirano ya,  
las mujeres indómitas  
también sabrán luchar.

Nosotros queremos  
la libertad,  
y nuestros machetes  
nos la dará...  
y nuestro machete  
nos la dará...

Vámonos, borinqueños,  
vámonos ya,  
que nos espera ansiosa,  
ansiosa la libertad.  
La libertad, la libertad!



# RICANSTRUCTING (R)EVOLUTION



Within the New York City underground, no band has come close to exhibiting the socially conscious, no-compromise stance of El Barrios' own Puerto Punx, RICANSTRUCTION. Actively and loudly supporting everything from the liberation of political prisoners, the battle against police brutality, the squatters movement, to the struggle to free Puerto Rico, Ricanstruction has boldly fused the raw and radical sounds of hardcore hip hop, political punk, and seditious salsa to create a sonically subversive soundtrack for the revolution. I spoke with Ricanstruction's vocalist and "not for profit prophet", Ras Alano, about music, politics, and keeping it really "real."

## Could you give us a little background on Ricanstruction?

I and I emerged from beneath the underdog approximately four years ago with the intention of creating the soundtrack of slum sedition, subversion, and survival.

## Could you elaborate on that?

When the members of Ricanstruction first came together, we were squatters from the Lower East Side of New York, survivors from Harlem, USA - El Barrio Boricuas who had experienced what Piri Thomas called "these mean streets". We knew what it was to live as a colonized people, as sufferers, as ghetto guerrillas, and we wanted to make art that reflected that reality.

## So your music was primarily motivated by the hardships of ghetto life?

We try to create based on the world we know, in the hope of keeping it honest and really "real," so the hardships do tend to shape and mold the music. There's no denying that you will be influenced by ghettos, guns, gangsters, and an absence of God. But it wasn't, and isn't, all about a hard knock life. We

CBGB just because we felt like it. And we were also smart enough to know that Coltrane and Billie Holiday, in their own way, were also punks. So when we came to music as a means of communication and edification, we knew it would have to reflect all these elements.

## So do you see yourselves as a hip hop group or a punk band or a salsa band?

Yes.

## OK, and what about the political aspects of your music, was this a calculated choice?

We never consciously pursued politics in our art. As we say, Rasta don't mess wit' politricks, you know. It's just that it doesn't take a part time prophet to figure out that in Babylon all things are political. Poverty is political, ghettos is political, hungry children is political, survival is political, resistance is political. The personal is indeed political, and to ignore this truth is a surefire recipe for enslavement.

## Do you think that "political" music can change the world?

I think the world is gonna change with or without us, or within us and without us. I've always believed that music, political or otherwise, is more of a reflection of the world we live in. A mirror of what's goin' on.

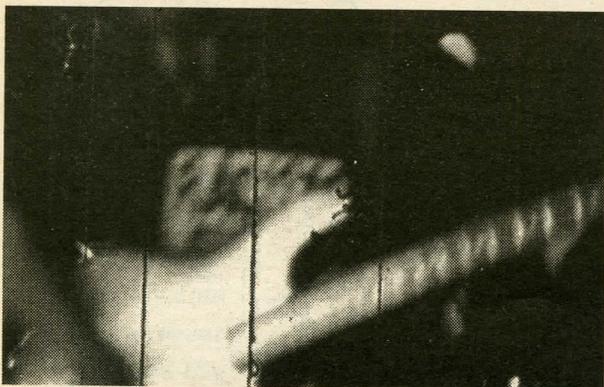
But having said that, I should add that it's still necessary as downpressed people to resist our downpressors in whatever ways we can, including art.

## So are all the songs about guns and bitches and gratuitous violence a reflection of the world we live in?

No doubt there's a reflection of the world some of us live in. But also, it's been shown that that shit sells. As long as it's sellin', some clever capitalists will copy, co-opt and cash in on the crap. It's a reality that capitalism, and everything that goes with it, is a reflection of the

# RICANSTRUCTION

also knew a world where our parents grooved to bomba y plena, and our sisters danced their cares away at the salsa clubs every Friday night. And those were beautiful things, not hardships. Meanwhile, we were hip hop heads who could also be found sneaking into the hardcore punk matinees at



world we live in. The key is not to condemn the music, but to dismantle and ultimately destroy the shistem that made these messages and this madness necessary and profitable.

## But don't you think that as artists we should have some obligation to create uplifting or conscious art that's not simply about cashing in?

I think artists should follow their muse and human beings, their consciences. But the downpressed are obligated to rebel.

## So Ricanstruction chose to rebel. Why?

We are the downpressed.

## Is that the only reason?

Well, it's also part of our life long mission to undermine every aspect of western civilization.

## Do Ricanstruction consider themselves anarchist or communists?

We don't mess with politricks and we don't believe in titles and tags either. We try to believe that hidden, submerged, beneath all the sludge

and slime of this shistem is a better, beautiful, place. And it's just our obligation to chip and bang and scream and slam and agitate, agitate, agitate, until we reach that place. Zion ain't about politricks, or ideologies, except perhaps the politics of revolution or the ideology of freedom.

**But you're Puerto Rican Nationalists, right?**

It's hard to be a Nationalist without a nation. But if your asking whether or not we advocate Puerto Rican independence, the answer couldn't be anything but yes. We believe that all people have a right to be free, and we also believe that once Puerto Rico is free, Puerto Rico will free the rest of the world. Todos somos Macheteros.

**Do you use your music to get the message of Puerto Rican independence out?**

military for several decades now. It's taken many shapes and forms, from fishermen and women waging battles against huge US navy ships with nothing more than tiny fishing boats, to children, like David against Goliath, throwing stones at big US marines and running away. The recent take over of US military bombing sites by Puerto Ricans and the creation of "free Puerto Rico" liberated zones is just the most recent action in this struggle of resistance. In fact, when Ricanstruction went there in 1998, it was for a "kick the US military out of Vieques" music festival.

**This may be a heavy question, but do you see the US military leaving Vieques?**

Well, it's kind of a "heavy" question for a simple Puerto Punk like myself, but I believe that it's not a question of whether they'll get out or not, but simply a question of when. I returned to Vieques this year, and the compañeras y compañeros had the same fire in their stomachs that I remembered witnessing the first time I was in Vieques. Yo, and the folks in the liberated zones are no joke. They're in for the long haul. They've built barrios in these bombing zones. Churches, classrooms – they've made themselves into human shields against US bombs. The military isn't gonna leave 'cause they want to, but because they have to. What's going on in the the liberated zones right now is just the first strike. The struggle for Vieques has been going on for decades, and may go on for may more. But what did Albizu say, "the day comes when justice arms the weak and puts the giants to flight."

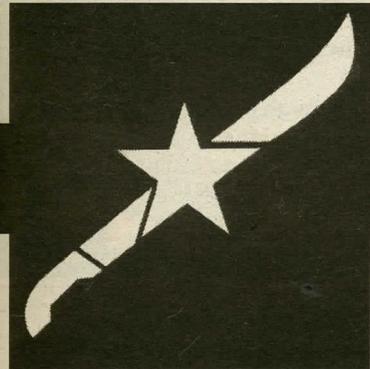
**So you're confident that that the Viequesenses will "put the giant to flight"?**

Yes, David will prevail and revolution is in the air. But I still want to know what happens after the revolution.

**What do you mean?**

Well, it's not just a question of kicking the US military out. Once you've kicked the US military out, you've still gotta boot the US completely out of Vieques. And then the rest of Puerto Rico. And all them capitalist have gotta say adios as well. You've still gotta make sure the land is returned to the people, and not the real estate vultures and capitalists vampires that are waiting to pounce on those white sand beaches. Puerto Rico has been struggling and searching and starving for freedom for a very long

When I think about Puerto Rico's colonial condition, it makes my stomach turn. We marked the hundredth anniversary of U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico two years ago. That's over a hundred years of U.S. downpression, injustice, racism, sexism, capitalism, imperialism – way too many isms and schisms. And in those hundred years, Puerto Ricans have resisted this colonial contamination and have been rewarded with exploitation, COINTELPRO, imprisonment, and assassination. Each day I think about it, it makes me angry; each day I live it, it makes me wanna holla', it makes me wanna fight. No doubt this has to be reflected in the music, the art, we make. I, personally, can't pretend everything is all right. I won't become part of a shitstem who's goal it is to use us, abuse us, and refuse us.



We've gotta write about these things; talk, scream, reason, resist, revolt. Somebody once asked me why Ricanstruction's music was so loud, so angry, so "militant"... I guess this is why.

**Do you find that people get the "message"?**

I find that even when they don't get the message, they get it. People usually leave a Ricanstruction gathering enlightened or enraged. Pissed off or pumped up. Annoyed or armed, nobody's ever indifferent. So I tend to think they get it, like it or not.

**Ricanstruction performed a couple of years ago in Vieques, Puerto Rico. Was the political climate as hot then as now?**

In its own way, yes. The people of Vieques have been engaged in a David vs Goliath like war against the US



time now. This is not just about Vieques, or about whether the US military should be allowed to bomb or not. This is about whether or not the US will be allowed to continue to maintain its colonial control of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican people. This is about political, cultural, physical, economic and spiritual liberation. This is about getting free, plain and simple. We've gotta reach the point where we're thinking with revolutionized minds and not colonized mind.

**And then?**

And then start another revolution, man.

[www.rikanstruction.net](http://www.rikanstruction.net)





# Willie Colon

## Socialized Salsa

Back in the late 60s and early 70s, at the ripe old age of 16, singer, songwriter, arranger, producer, trombonist, and band leader Willie Colon helped spearhead a musical movement that would come to be known as salsa. Straight from the streets of Nueva Yor', salsa fused a gritty inner-city ghetto sensibility with cross-cultural Latino lyrics, and blew up all over the world with a mambo that was meaner than a molotov cocktail. BLU spoke with Willie about the science, story, and socialization of Salsa.

interview by Isaac Sorenson

### Could you talk a little bit about your musical history?

I was born on 139 St. in the Bronx. It is a very mixed neighborhood, which is one of the things that contributed to all of the things I've been able to write about. The exposure to Black music, to other ethnicities, started a kind of all-inclusive musical concept. This was the seed of what would become the salsa movement.

### For those that don't know that much about the history of salsa, how long have you been making music?

I was about 11 years old, my grandmother brought me a trumpet. I started playing that and I think about 13 years old I had started a small group and I was playing. I would play out on the streets. By about the age of 16 I was discovered and I recorded my first LP. And I guess in those days the music was a platform, there was a lot of things happening in the city, so the music had a very social and political edge to it. When I started out in '66 with my first record with a kid named Hector Lavoe.

### Could you tell us a little about that?

Well, I didn't speak much Spanish then. I understood Spanish, but I didn't speak a lot of Spanish, so Hector kind of became my voice. He had such a prolific repertoire. It was surprising – the kid could sing anything from a tango to a ballad. He was just incredible. And it was one of those things of fate that we got together. I had a lot of good musical ideas and he was able to execute. We had an eight year run, Hector and I, where we had hit records which allowed us to travel throughout Latin America and the rest of the world. We found that we kind of started a movement which had a social and political context.

### What were some of the political causes that you were working with in the beginning of your career?

In the beginning I mostly embraced environmental issues, but there was always the lyrical commentary on issues such as immigration, poverty, and drugs in the inner city. We chronicled life in the city and as time went on we became more and more socially aware.

### Can you tell us about when you hooked up with Ruben Blades?

With my travels, my perspective expanded to a more kind of international thing by the time I met Ruben Blades. He was the mail boy at Tamla Records and he

used to write these terrifically political lyrics, but they were like books and they didn't fit the format of the music. So we had to change the music to kind of hold this content that Ruben was really prolifically producing. We did an album called *Siempre* which dealt with issues such as the struggle in Nicaragua, and just trying to promote Latino pride and unity. We continued to make lyrical statements about U.S. intervention in Latin America and things like that.

### When did you begin to get involved in politics outside of the music?

Slowly I started to gravitate towards politics, towards real world politics, instead of just talking about it in a song. I began speaking at schools and representing different groups before the City Council. In '94 I decided to run for congress. I got 38% of the vote which surprised everybody, because I was an insurgent and a neophyte.

### I was checking out your web page and I noticed you have quite a bit of information on Vieques, and one thing I would like to ask about is your thoughts on the deal that Rosello made with the US government concerning the struggle to remove the US navy from Vieques?

I think he caved in, he talked tough and then he just buckled. There is really no justification for using Vieques anymore as a target. There is no justification for the nuclear contamination, the radioactive pollution that they have left there. There is no justification to jeopardize the health of the inhabitants of Vieques.

### What do you feel about the US threats to remove the people out of the liberated zones?

I really think that it is outrageous. I think it is shameful that President Clinton just didn't sign an executive order and end all of this. Vieques is not a sand dune with two palm trees on it. This is a thriving community, this is a city with a history, with American citizens that deserve to live a healthy life.

### Do you think that "political music" can make a difference in the world?

Absolutely. I think that people that have prominence and the respect of other people, have a responsibility to speak to, and sometimes for, those people. I think socially conscious music can and does make an impact.

# The Puerto Ricanization of a Nuyorican



photo by Emily Fader © 1998

I speak to you now as a born-again Puerto Rican – not in the Biblical sense, but rather in a historical and cultural sense.

Having been born and raised in el Barrio, East Harlem, New York City, I say this after visiting the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

The uniqueness of the Puerto Rican is this two-world thing: Puerto Rico vs. the United States. I went to Puerto Rico, to Vieques, as a Puerto Rican born and raised in the United States, but not as an American.

It is my experience which has made me a Puerto Rican. Nothing else. I could have been born on the moon, as a Puerto Rican and would still be nothing less than a Puerto Rican. I think often of all the traitors and collaborators with the u.s. government who have helped to keep our country in chains because of their treachery. Look at the photos of El Massacre de Ponce and view those cops holding revolvers to the backs of true Puerto Rican freedom fighters. How Puerto Rican are they? I say that when a "Nuyorican" adopts the flag

of Puerto Rico, its history, even after just the flavor of being Puerto Rican, this is the beginning of being born again. When I look at the many smiling faces during the Puerto Rican day parade in New York City, waving nuestra bandera and so full of pride – I still ask myself "What is Puerto Rican?" How many of those flag waving Boricuas would be willing to fight to the death to protect, to liberate Puerto Rico?

Today I claim "Nuyoricanism" as mine because it mostly clearly defines my reality – the reality of a man from a nationless nation born in a strange land, an unknown city, but this reality still attaches me culturally to my people, my heritage and ancestry.

JESUS PAPOLETO MELÉNDEZ IS A NATIVE NEW YORK PUERTO RICAN AND ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE NUYORICAN POETS' MOVEMENT.

www.nuyorican.com

## The Nuyorican Poets Cafe

"Spoken word is here to stay," Lois Griffith responds when I asked her what she thought about people describing spoken word as a passing fad. "Some people are saying it's trendy, but it's been the basis of our shows here for over twenty-five years, That's not a trend."

Lois and I are sitting at the bar waiting for the show to begin. She's the woman Julio told me about. Along with Miguel Algarín, Willie Correa, Miguel Piñero and Lucky Cien Feugos, Lois Griffith is one of the founding members of this place where poetry is revealed as living art, as contact sport, as a growing, developing, challenging force. Like Miguel Algarín wrote in the introduction to *Aloud – voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe*, "the poets take responsibility for breaking all boundaries that limit and diminish the impact of their work. It is at the heart of the matter to move their work from the Cafe into other communities of the city in order to break racial patterns that isolate these communities... Thus the artist becomes the catalyst through which social change is made."

The Cafe, which opened in 1974 on Sixth Street, between Avenues A and B, moved to its current location, Third Street between Avenues 5 and C, in 1980. Its ties to the surrounding communities go back to long before this Lower-East Side neighborhood was "cleaned up." Lois tells me how during the late 70s and early 80s a lot of the patrons were between the ages of 15 and 21 and were looking for a sort of haven away from the drug infested streets. "It was – and still is – a place where people could come and have the space to express themselves. Back then there were a lot fewer venues for people, especially those of color, to show their talents. This was around the time hip hop began, so kids would come because we offered a place where they could vent in a positive way, a place where they had a voice."

words by J.P. Ablo

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35 BLU 8



# BREAKIN BREAD WITH

Crazy Legs is a hip hop legend and one of the founding members of the Rock Steady Crew. A true B-boy from the Boogie Down, he helped lay down the foundation of that often neglected but never forgotten medium of hip hop – breakin’.

**Richie Colon** used to hang out around the Rock Steady Crew. He wanted to get down but they wouldn't let him because he was too young. So the soft spoken, polite kid changed his name to Crazy Legs and kept practicing. In 1979, Crazy Legs and his cousin Lenny Len battled two of the founders of Rock Steady Crew. They lost the battle, but showed off a move Crazy Legs had evolved call the Back Spin. They were in.

**Rock Steady Crew** was formed by Jimmy D, Jimmy Lee, Joe Joe, Easy Mike, and a couple of other brothers from the South Bronx. They called it Rock Steady because they wanted to keep the dance moving – keep it going steady. In 1981 Crazy Legs was put in charge of a chapter of Rock Steady in Manhattan. Within months he had about 500 people down with him. "We were keeping the name going," he says. Soon Crazy Legs was given the whole crew.

**Before the** mass media explosion of breakdancing, Crazy Legs used to pack bags at the Supermarket to finance his art. "It was us packing the bags to get the bus fair, pay the \$2 or whatever it cost to get into the Jam and then walk back home, because it would be like 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. We didn't start doing shows till '81. I started dancing in '77. It was four years till we started. It was never an intention for us to become professional dancers"

# CRAZY LEGS

by matina weeks

**Crazy Legs bases** his own b-boy ideology on what was passed down to him from the creators of the image. The word b-boy comes from Kool Herk. B-boy means BreakBoy, a person who gets down to the break part of a record, plain and simple. "The very essence of a b-boy and b-girl is the fact that they can dance. They allow their own individuality to shine through their dance. There isn't as much creativity as there was back in the days. I don't believe that fighting really has anything to do with hip hop. It's just part of society. I know plenty of dope B-boys that weren't stick up kids, and weren't involved with going out there with the gang fighting. It doesn't really have nothing to do with the other. I spent so much time on b-boying, my goodness. I could talk about that forever. I still haven't gotten what I wanted per say."

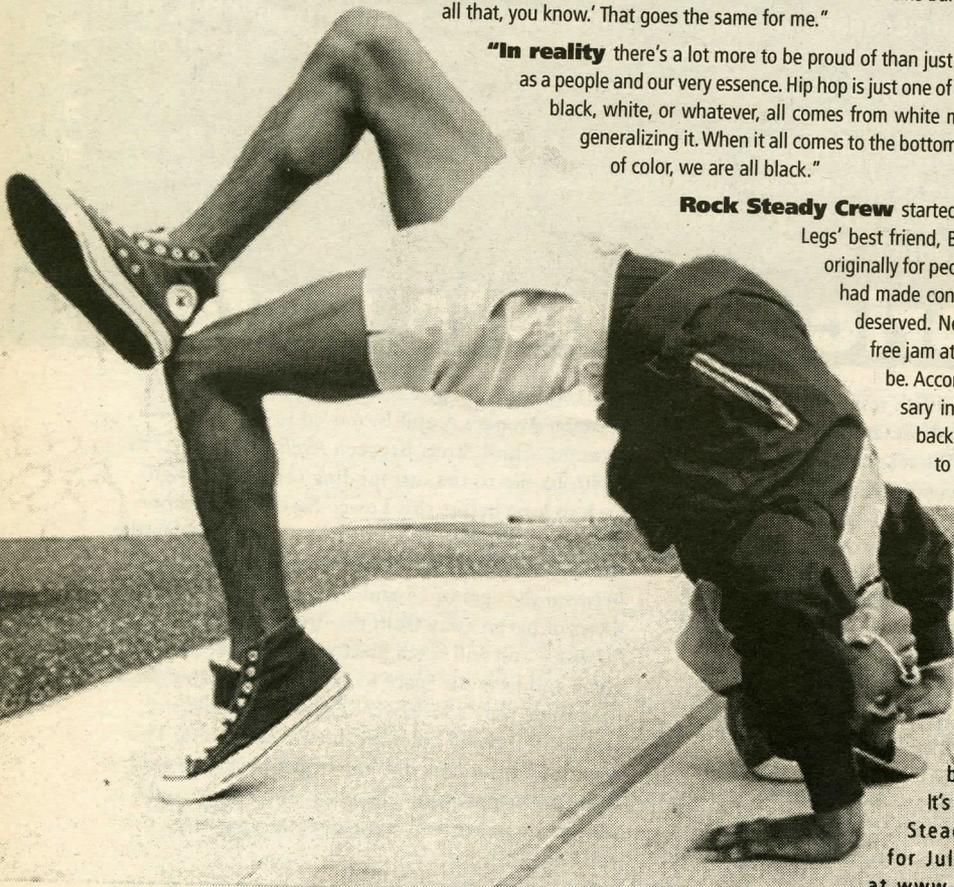
**For Crazy Legs** there's a lot more to breaking then just knowing the moves. "Moves don't move me," he says. "What moves me is when a person allows the music to take control of them and then get into them and into their ears, and it just shoots out of their body. They allow the music to move them in such a rhythmic way that they are not just out there to do moves but to be a person that's expressing himself as an individual. It's the music that you're allowing to move you, not you going out there trying to be a jester or something, just for the cause."

**One of the people** who has influenced Crazy Legs' philosophy is Afrikaa Bambaataa. To him, Bambaataa is "the nurturing father of hip hop – the person who tries and always works on making sure that we're not headed to being a dysfunctional hip hop family."

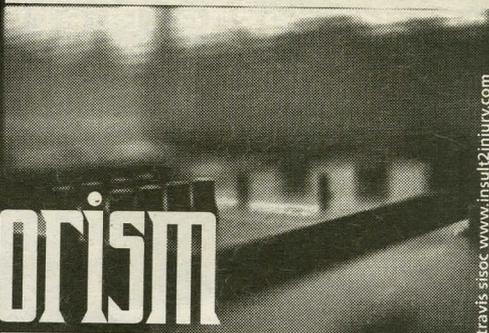
**"Bambaataa is** the person that taught me about being Puerto Rican," says Crazy Legs. Although he takes pride in his heritage, for Crazy Legs being Puerto Rican is not an issue. "Like Bambaataa said, 'I'm Puerto Rican, I'm black, I'm all that, you know.' That goes the same for me."

**"In reality** there's a lot more to be proud of than just hip hop. We need to take pride in who we are as a people and our very essence. Hip hop is just one of the things that we do. This whole Puerto Rican, black, white, or whatever, all comes from white media, labeling things black or white and just generalizing it. When it all comes to the bottom line, I would have to say most people that are of color, we are all black."

**Rock Steady Crew** started doing anniversary events in 1991 after Crazy Legs' best friend, Buck Four, passed away. The first events were originally for people who had passed away in Rock Steady who had made contributions, but never got the recognition they deserved. Now they celebrate their anniversary and do a free jam at the same time, in retrospect to how it used to be. According to Crazy Legs the Rock Steady anniversary in NY is the closest you'll ever get to hip hop break in the days. "It's just something that you had to be there for. If you weren't there you missed it. And I'm only talking about '82 and before. I was just fortunate to witness it. People try to talk about 'Back in the Day' and I'm like damn man you just caught what happened after '82. But just being there when it was at its innocence and the motivation was solely for neighborhood status. That was it. That's as pure as it can get. You got to a jam and you see comparing graph arts, comparing black books, she's on the mike, b-boys getting down, and DJ's cutting it up. It's like one big community center." This year Rock Steady's anniversary event is planned for July 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>. You can check it out at [www.RockSteadyCrew.com](http://www.RockSteadyCrew.com).



# Tony Touch



Tony Touch came up rockin' underground mixed tapes. With his ear to the street and his hand on the pulse he made a name for himself pumpin' out the best in NYC's underground MCs. Tony Touch's new album *The Piece Maker* is an extension of his roots with a who's who in hip hop steeping up to the mic. We spoke with Tony Touch about hip hop, independence for Puerto Rico, and Pedro Albizu Campos.

**Originally the hip hop nation consisted of MCs, DJs, breakers, and graffiti writers, but these days when people refer to "hip hop", they're only talking about rappers. How do you feel about DJs and turntablists being pushed to the back of the bus, so to speak, when it comes to the hip hop movement, along with graffiti artists and breakers?**

Basically, it's all the way the corporate world is structured. They're looking for what makes the money, and they figure it's with the music or rappers alone. You know, it's unfortunate, but none the less, I feel like our presence is still a strong one. Like the Rock Steady Crew's annual anniversaries are still well supported, and a lot of people come from all over the world for that. I traveled all over the globe, and actually hip hop is a little more respected and the art is more appreciated in Europe and Japan. Over there, the b-boy and graffiti movement is in the forefront, you know what I mean. These days when you study hip hop you have to think universally. It's definitely still out there and it's definitely still making an impact.

**The DJs are also making an above ground comeback. Do you think it has something to do with the underground explosion of mixed tapes?**

Yeah, and the success of certain mixed tape projects gone commercial, you know what I mean. A lot of companies are now using mixed tapes as promo items for whatever they're trying to promote, be it major companies like Sprite or restaurants like McDonalds. You see commercials for these major corporations with the DJs. So basically the word on the mixed tape has gotten out, they've become a successful promotional tool, you know what I mean.

**Lately were seeing artists like dead prez and Mos Def come up with a more conscious stance, but it seems like the "unconscious" rap still dominates. Do you think that hip hop should strive to be more conscious?**

Yeah, I would say so. But I blame the corporate infrastructure and the way radio works. Radio has shown itself to be pretty

irresponsible with hip hop music. But this thing, this movement, started in the streets, so what do you expect. You have to keep it in the streets if you want to keep it real. Every time it gets commercialized it gets watered down. That goes for all things.

**I understand that you're getting in touch with your Taino roots. The history of the Taino is one of struggle against Spanish colonialism. How do you feel that applies to Puerto Rico's struggle with colonialism today?**

There's still a lot of work to be done obviously. There's never a time when we can just relax and say it's done. It's never done, there's always something coming up. The powers that be, they run this whole thing. They've been in power for years and years. This country was founded by people who were thieves, so there'll never be justice on stolen land.

**Could you tell us a little about how your quest to find out about your Taino ancestry came about and how it relates to your citizenship in the hip hop nation?**

Well, basically I stumbled upon my history as I began to visit my homeland, Puerto Rico, more. I got involved with DJing events out there and hooked up with a lot of the locals. Casual conversations turned into heavy conversations, and I started to really dig deeper into the whole Taino history. I've been using the name The Taino Turntable Terrorist for years as an alias. But once I got into it, it started to become something real to me. My Taino heritage started to really mean something more than just a word.

**And in what direction do you see your consciousness and the struggle heading?**

All I can say is that people have to continue to rise and speak up and bring awareness and just stay in the struggle, you know what I mean. Hopefully we can make things a little bit easier for our kids, because it's a little bit easier for us now from what was done in the past. But there's still a lot of work to be done, you know.

**You've got a snippet from a Pedro Albizu Campos speech on your latest release. What was your reason for sampling Albizu?**

I participated in the making of the Young Lords movie, a documentary produced by Iris Moralez called *Pa'lante siempre Pa'lante*, so I had the opportunity to work with former Young Lords, and I was always in tune with my history as far as the music and the cultural vibe were concerned. And although I wasn't too familiar with Pedro Albizu Campos, I knew of him. I got my hands on this tape and it was this whole speech of his. I looked for something to play from him that would have more of a strong metaphoric thing to what he was saying. It was kind of him just warming up since he was just getting started with that speech and he was basically talking about the battle of good and evil. I was personally very motivated and moved by his speech. I wanted to have him represent because I like to represent the ancestors, and I don't think people will ever fully recognize him for what he's done for Puerto Rico. He's like the Puerto Rican Malcolm X.



# HIP HOP CRIOLLO

Representando desde Puerto Rico

images and words by  
fernando reals (TCK)



In Puerto Rico, heads say 1, 2... 1, 2... in English when they rock the mic. Graffiti pieces, in any language, are now beginning to add color to the walls of La Perla, Puerto Rico's infamous ghetto. Zulu nation b-boys dancing in Caguas express themselves in the universal magnetic language – uprocking, footwork, and power moves. Deep in the narrow streets of Río Piedras, one can hear the deep scratches of a DMC caliber turntablist, K-Kemmit, as one walks through the night.

Who would have thought that this cultural entity, which some have dubbed the hip hop movement, was so prevalent in Puerto Rico?

Before and beyond, Big Pun – may he rest in peace – and Fat Joe ripping the mic at the Tito Trinidad and de la Hoya fight, hip hop and Puerto Ricans have had a long marriage that has often suffered a media and scholar induced amnesia. However, even for the most rooted Nuyoricans it can come as a surprise to walk the streets of El Viejo San Juan and think you just stepped out of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in its heyday, or head over to a small dive in Carolina and flash back to a night at the Lyricist Lounge.

In fact as I am writing this piece, heads in P.R. are taking it back to the roots; this past month there was a hip hop jam in the middle of Canales, a housing project in the shadows of the temple of Puerto Rican consumerism – Plaza Las Americas. B-boys and B-girls were flanked by graffiti writers, while emcees battled and DJs set the tone for a scene straight out of WildStyle, except it isn't nostalgic fiction in Puerto Rico, it's the contemporary reality.

Hip hop has been brewing in Puerto Rico for some time now. The puddle of water, and the politics, that separates the islanders from their cousins in the streets of urban sectors in the

U.S. has not managed to keep the floodgates of cultural exchange shut. We also can't front; hip hop is being commodified, gobbled up and spit out as something called the Rap Industry, and as a result of that process, Rap is cropping up in every corner of the world. But what exactly is happening in Puerto Rico?

With the emergence of a commercially viable Rap Industry in the U.S., built on a foundation of hip hop rooted in the urban centers such as New York City, Newark, Chicago, Atlanta, Miami, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area, promoters in Puerto Rico began to organize concerts called "The Rap Attack" in the late 80s. It was at these concerts that Tek One, one of the San Juan area's freshest independent emcees got to see acts like KRS-1, Eric B. and Rakim, Public Enemy, Special Ed, De La Soul, Slick Rick and many others.

For Puerto Rican youth on the island, this sparked the response to a call in the form of an underground rap scene spearheaded by such Puerto Rican emcees as Vico-C and DJs like Negro and Playero. This scene quickly became a notorious subculture that threatened the status quo by appealing to and empowering the so-called criminal classes: the poor, working class, and Blacks of the caserios or public housing projects. The so-called underground music also threatened the sanctity of traditional politics by challenging the narrow nationalism that called for Danza, Bomba, Plena, and Salsa as the only acceptable forms of musical expression in Puerto Rico. Que bad trip! This culminated in the criminalization of the music along with its participants: in the mid 90s, the government cracked-down on independent underground rap music by using questionable obscenity laws to confiscate all tapes and equipment from stores and individuals who promoted it. You wanna talk about a war on youth? The Puerto Rican answer for a Hip hop scene was literally forced to go underground.

Now, a few years later, the so-called underground music has been commodified in the same way that hip hop has been translated through the Rap Industry into something steeped in cash ruling everything around me. El Underground, or Reggaeton as some call it, continues to be a preferred musical form for the working class and inhabitants of the caserios. However, as one San Juan area Emcee, E.A. Flow put it, "reggaeton was an underground art form, but now it is being coopted by the elite of the island who think they are on an adventure or a rollercoaster."

The San Juan-Carolina areas of Puerto Rico and the urban centers of the United States seem to be running on a similar track in the development of a broad independent hip hop culture. In all these locations, hip hop shows, b-boys and girls, and graffiti are reclaiming space in the social and cultural sphere as alternatives to the "get jigginess" of commercial music with its plastic culture.

In Puerto Rico, the arrival of a hip hop DJ from Texas named Nature has sparked a series of hip hop nights in 1999 that have attracted all types of hip hop junkies from those on the western part of the island who used to wrap their radio antennas in aluminum foil in order to get a clearer reception from a St. Thomas radio station that airs "The Wake Up Show" to Zulu B-boys from the countryside, campus emcees, and sisters who know more old-school lyrics than the average nyc high school student.

The heads on the scene that are blowing it come in a variety of styles and from diverse backgrounds; on an island 100 by 35 miles, there is a plethora of originality and a high level of respect for the art form, so no one is trying to bite off of one another. For instance, one refugee of the island's hardcore scene is finding his niche in the poetry of real hip hop and has appropriately dubbed himself E.A. Flow after Edgar Allen Poe. Tek One and J-Mo are also among the names that should appear in the lime light, however as is the nature of the industry in Puerto Rico, unless you are signed to a record company and willing to do Pepsi and Coors Light promotions, you are left to fend for yourself in the dark. And that is exactly what heads are doing.

With the exception of a few groups making power moves like El Sindicato, most groups involved in the developing hip hop scene in Puerto Rico have yet to successfully record and

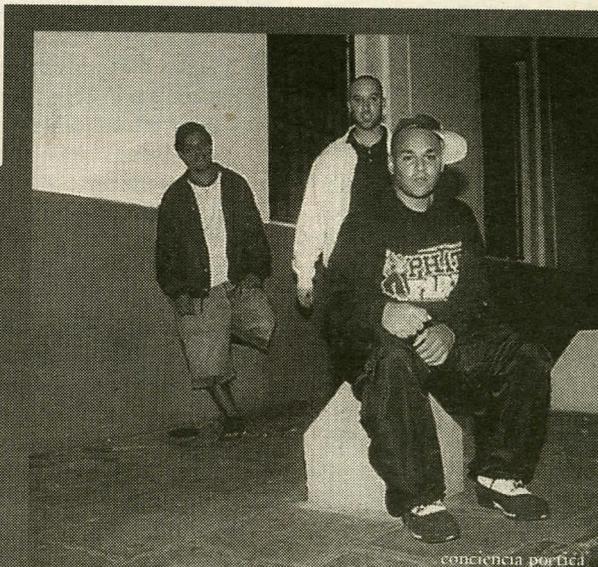
**B-boys and B-girls were flanked by graffiti writers, while emcees battled and DJs set the tone for a scene straight out of WildStyle, except it isn't nostalgic fiction IN PUERTO RICO, IT'S THE CONTEMPORARY REALITY.**

distribute their music. However, heads are organizing themselves and making their presence known in hopes of being able to reach a wider audience. One such alliance of emcees is La Vanguardia Subterranea, or Subterranean Vanguard, which is made up of Tek One and J-Mo of Xendero Luminoso, E.A. Flow of Penz and Needlez, Conciencia Poetica, and Loiza Foundation.

One factor that has been at the foundation of "underground" hip hop in the states has been the overwhelming support from college radio stations, unfortunately the Puerto Rican scene has yet to exploit that possibility. Velcro, an emcee from Santurce who has co-hosted a college radio show on WHRB while studying in the states, commented to me the lack of infrastructure in Puerto Rico will allow this scene to just die out unless heads start recording and creating a market of enthusiasts and supporters.

Alongside the development of an organic Hip-Hop scene based on urban roots mixed with Caribbean/Creole elements, the Puerto Rican scene is connected through an umbilical cord called the internet to their U.S. counterparts. It is in that way that hip-hop heads keep up with their influences like Loot Pack, Dilated Peoples, The Arsonists, and dead prez. Edgar Allen Flow is constantly trying to make contact with the streets of New York via cyberspace in order to make the relationship between these two centers of hip-hop reciprocal; his influences are Wordsworth of Punch and Words, Black Star, and Common.

The folks on the island do not want to be just receiving from the big cities of the North but rather want to share their diversity with heads in the capitol of hip hop - New York - and others cities in the U.S. and the Caribbean. Let us not forget the scene in La Habana, Cuba and her surrounding areas. Until then Puerto Rican emcees on the island will continue to contribute to this cutting-edge cultural form called hip hop.



Fernando Reals [reals@graffiti.net](mailto:reals@graffiti.net)

Edgar Allen Flow can be reached at [eaflows@graffiti.net](mailto:eaflows@graffiti.net)

"All the Blues  
That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Crimes

*No Justice, No Peace*

## TATS CRU Arrested for Big Pun Mural

INTERVIEW BY ISAAC SORENSEN

**T**ATS CRU - Nicer, Bio, and BG 183 - have been together for twenty years. Arrested for vandalism while they were finishing their Big Pun Mural, they spent a night in jail and were released because of pressure from the community.

**BLU:** What's your association with Pun and Fat Joe?

**Nicer:** We knew Pun before he ever got signed to any record label. Joe actually wrote graffiti, he was street bombing before he even started any record deal. He always used to joke around, saying he was going to come out with an album, but we always knew him as a graffiti bomber. So he was like being part of us.

Then he dropped his first album and that was it, he just blew from there. Then he introduced Pun to us and Pun was just a funny mothafucka. If you knew Pun you would really die laughing - he was just a happy person at all times. He took success really well because he didn't grow an ego behind it, he was the same old Pun, the same guy that we met the first time.

**BLU:** Why did you pick that community to put the mural up in and what does that mural mean to the community?

**Nicer:** For a lot of people these memorial walls become the ghetto version of a wailing wall. It's a place where people can go and pay homage to a person and a community, but it is also a gathering place for people that knew them and didn't know them. You see these gatherings, people that didn't even know each other conversing - there is this open door or relationship where you

start talking like, "I knew him this way," or "I never met him but I loved his music." The same goes for some of the memorial walls that we've done for people that haven't had the kind of fame or praise that Pun has gotten.

*These memorial walls become the ghetto version of a wailing wall.*

It is sort of like a cleansing process in a lot of these Latino neighborhoods. It dates back to the culture in the little island where we're from, Puerto Rico, where these deaths that occur by the side of roads, or if someone died inside of a home from old age or something. The families would come from the neighborhood and bring flowers to the front of the house and start creating a little shrine. Or if someone died by a roadside they will create a little shrine there. It is sort of the same tradition, but it carried over here into the city just using the art forms that are familiar from these neighborhoods and incorporating it with the same theme like putting flowers and stuff like that.

**BLU:** What's up with your work at the Point?

**Nicer:** The classes we do sort of give the kids a place where they can come and be accepted whatever they wanted to do. The kids in this community have their own culture, they have their own

form of dance, their own form of art, their own form of music. So the classes give kids that are interested in the art form a place where they can come and do it and it was going to be accepted and not looked down upon. I remember being in high school and having to hide my sketches of my letters underneath assignments just so the teacher wouldn't look at it and I would have to hear the old, "Well, that's not art, do what the rest of us are doing."

It started when we were asked by the founders of the Point to do a sign for them and they came up with the idea of having art lessons here. They said they're making a cultural center to teach culture and dance and art and stuff. So we were like, What culture are you going to teach? You are going to reinforce what is already out here or are you going to bring something that is foreign to these kids like ballet and classical music and stuff? So they asked us to get into contact with the right heads. So we called up Crazy Legs from Rock Steady and had him come over. He checked the place out and he started doing lessons in break dancing and that's how we got involved in and did the graff. We're still doing the classes. Regardless of wherever we are out in the United States, we always fly back, whether it is all three of us or one of us, we always fly back to make sure we do these classes.

CLASSIFIED

*City of New York seeks a caring, empathetic police commissioner. Wants long term commitment in a growing relationship; mutual respect a must. Please send photo.*

*"CAUSE NOBODY'S FEELIN SAFIR"*



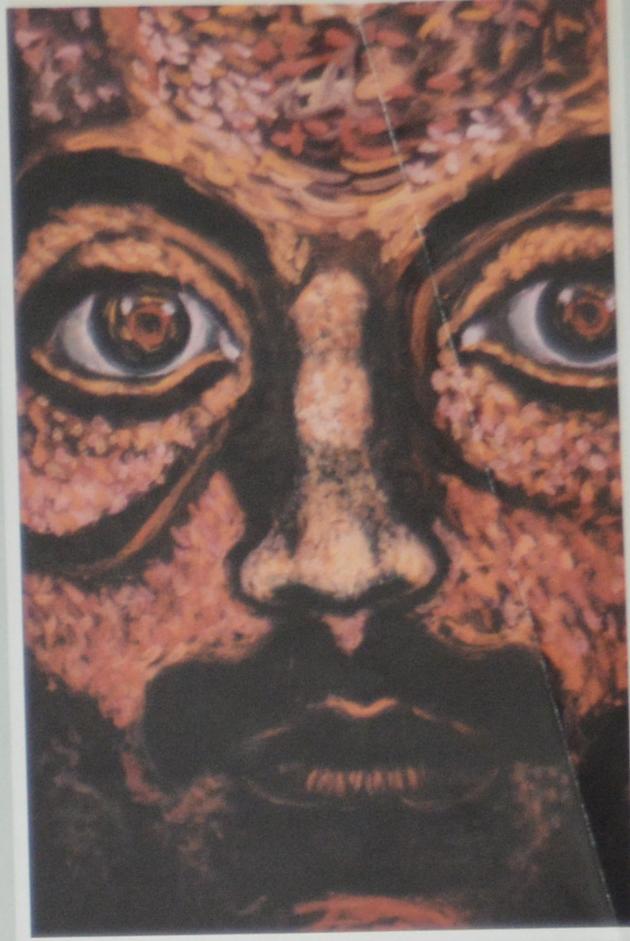
# big pun

This is the mural that Tats Cru was arrested for creating. They said of Big Pun, "Pun was just a funny mothafucka. If you knew Pun you would really die laughing - he was just a happy person at all times."

## Albizu Campos painting by Elizam Escobar



Elizam Escobar is one of Puerto Rico's most significant revolutionary poets and painters. His paintings are filled with meaning for boriquenos and their continued struggle. Elizam's art comes from the heart of a man who has spent 18 years in prison for his people and nation. He continues to fight for his people through different mediums - painting, poetry, writing, and more.



## THE ADVENTURES OF AGENT BLU

In this episode, Agent BLU's phone is tapped by the CIA. BLU gets wise to their tricks and goes to Cuba where he meets revolutionary heroes Willie Morales and Assata Shakur who charge him with the task of reorganizing the Young Lords Party.



BLU's place: BLU's lampin' on the couch when...



BLU reminisces about the past

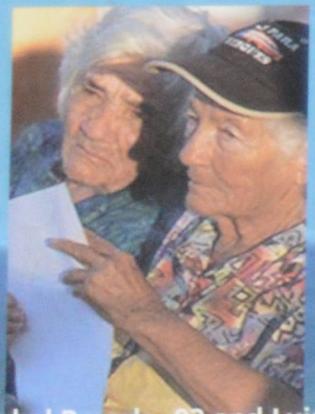




Defiant protesters arrested on Camp Yayi.



Lolita Lebron led away from Camp Garcia by a federal agent.



Isabel Rosado, 93 and Luisa Guadalupe, 82 at Camp Garcia, Vieques.

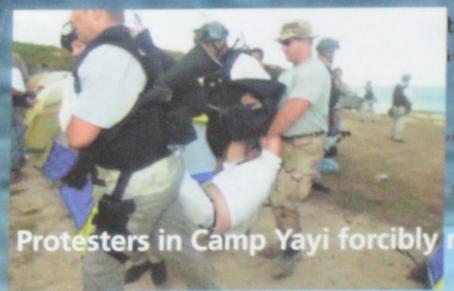
# THE BATTLE FOR VIEQUES

## You will defeat a god of fear and only then will you be free.

### Betances



u.s. army base Fort Buchanan in San Juan, PR



Protesters in Camp Yayi forcibly removed by federal agents in full riot gear.



u.s. navy removes a casita

Blocked by Tactical units, Vieques residents show support cheering on arrested protesters

When tyranny is law, revolution is order! - Albizu

A revolutionary is guided by the greatest feelings of love. - Ché



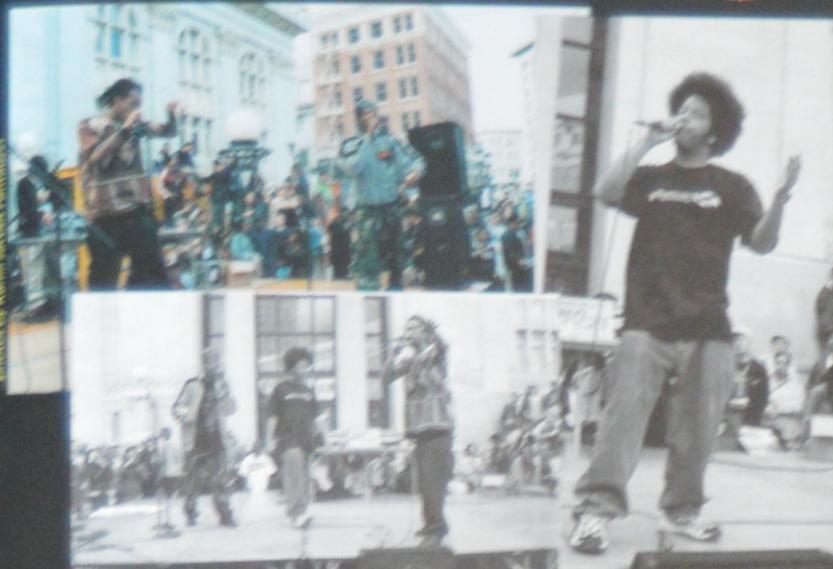
"CUANDO LA TIRANIA ES LA LEY, LA REVOLUCIÓN ES EL ORDEN."  
-ALBIZU

"EL VERDADERO REVOLUCIONARIO ES GUIADO POR LOS SENTIMIENTOS DE AMOR MÁS GRANDES."  
-CHE

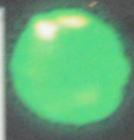
NE corner of 105th street and 3rd avenue, el barrio NYC

# Fighting Words

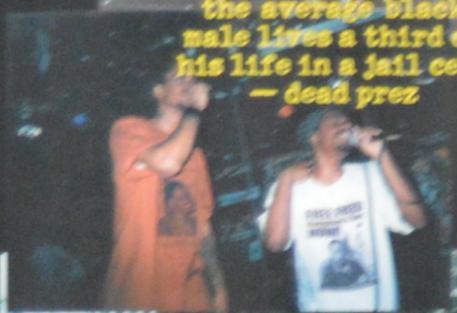
photos by Karim Jacobs Fattouzzi



if you cut the welfare and jobs  
you gonna have murders and mols  
— boots riley



the average black  
male lives a third of  
his life in a jail cell  
— dead prez



CA youth and boots riley's  
guerilla sound system. This rapivist  
assault vehicle drove through the  
streets of the Bay Area to raise aware-  
ness about harsh juvenile crime laws.



## ARTISTS VS THE WAR ON YOUTH

e Rayz Walz

photos by John Schultz



orko the sykotic alien



they tryin to lock you down like Attica, the African diaspora  
represents strength in numbers, a giant can't slumber forever  
— talib kweli

dj nature,  
san juan, puerto rico



photo by Fernando Reals

we will not be bought or sold  
— ricanstruction



photos by David Maxwell

Blasfemo of King Chango  
with Not a Prophet of  
Reconstruction at CB's  
Gallery (NYC) to mobilize  
against the US aggression  
against the island of Vieques,  
Puerto Rico

Bubblin crack, jewel theft and robbery to combat poverty  
and end up in the global jail economy  
Stiffer stipulations attached to each sentence  
Budget cutbacks but increased police presence  
And even if you get out of prison still livin  
Join the other five million under state supervision  
— nos def

nos def performing in santa cruz, CA at a show with  
ozomatli and meshell ndegeocello  
"no prop 21!"

ozomatli getting the crowd crunk at a no prop 21 concerts with nos def and meshell ndegeocello

open your ear cause slavery will  
reappear when corporate cutthroats  
control your career  
— ozomatli



photos by Karim Jacobs Fattouzzi

# GRITO DE VIEQUES



My name is Vieques.  
I am Puerto Rican girl.  
My stepfather is the United States.  
He comes into my room at night to do his business.

My name is Vieques,  
I used to dream that Spain, my real father,  
would come back and rescue me.  
But he's gone for good.  
I have only the faint and echoing voices of  
Africana and Taina ancestors telling me that  
I can survive this.

My name is Vieques.  
When my body started to change, my stepfa-  
ther dressed me in a clingy, itchy dress.  
"Smile," he told me, "Smile at the nice foreign  
military man," and pushed me toward him.  
The military man was not nice.  
His skin was pasty. His breath smelled, I  
couldn't understand his language.  
He came into my room and did his business.

My name is Vieques.  
Sometimes my stepfather sells me to whole  
groups.  
He calls them allied forces.  
I fought back the best I could with chains and  
live bodies and fishing boats.  
It happened anyway.

My name is Vieques.  
I am still fighting back.  
I am bigger and stronger now.  
I have put a church, an encampment, a struggle  
up at my bedroom door.  
My stepfather can't get in.  
He has not been able to do his business for  
months now, longer than I ever dreamed.

My name is Vieques,  
Without the shock of constant bombardment,  
the numbness is subsiding.

I look at my body and see the devastation.  
Lagoons, like self-esteem, have dried to noth-  
ingness.  
My womb is wilting with radiation from ille-  
gally used uranium ammunition.  
Where my skin was once lush and soft, I am  
scarred.  
Old tanks, like cigarette burns, dot my flesh.  
Unexploded bombs, like memories, may deto-  
nate in the future  
when chosen lovers touch me in the wrong spot  
or without warning.

My name is Vieques.  
The numbness is subsiding.

Tender shoots of grass push up toward the sky.  
A lizard sneaks back to sun itself on a chunk of  
shrapnel.  
A butterfly alights on a rusted out jet.  
Fish slowly make their way back toward my  
shores,  
no longer reverberating with shockwaves of  
violation,

My name is Vieques.  
This is my body.  
It may be worth eighty million dollars a year to  
you, Yanqui,  
but it is priceless to me.

My door is barred.  
I have burned the clingy, itchy dress.  
The encampment grows stronger.  
The lizards, the grass, the fish, the butterflies  
stand with me.  
I'll never be the same,  
but I'll never be yours again to do your dirty  
business.

My name is Vieques  
and I will be free.

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# DREAM

but don't sleep the passing of a legend

IT IS OUR DUTY  
TO FIGHT  
FOR OUR FREEDOM

IT IS OUR DUTY  
TO WIN

Assata Shakur

**Dream would come with a tight ass burner that would have most writers in awe, and on top of that he was thoughtful enough to enlighten us with a conscious message.**

Hip hop culture has produced a number of the world's most creative geniuses. Some of them have inspired the masses through poetic verse (emcee), articulating the aspirations of a hungry new inner city generation. There are others who have danced to movements of the universe (breakerz), keeping us instep with our ancestral past. In that same rhythmic vein resides the keepers of the beat (deejayz), the beats that pattern themselves after our souls. Lastly, are the GrandMasters scribes (writerz), these artistic visionaries who have for the last three decades forged masterpieces on our city walls and railways. Their paintings have suggested the endless possibilities that lie at the feet of this new generation.

On February 17, 2000, hip hop lost one of its GrandMaster painters, "Dream 1" (Michael Francisco). Thirty years old, "Mike Dream" was shot and murdered in the streets of Oakland by a killer who remains at large. Although his death was untimely there is much to be said about the legacy this brotha left behind. Dream began his writing career in Oakland, California, in 1983 and became one of the pioneers of a movement that would blossom into a cultural renaissance. Dream was a member of two Bay Area powerhouse crews: TDK (Teach Dem Kids) and KTD (Kings 'Til Death). He was also affiliated with other crews like QMC, TMC, and FC (New York). I remember the morning I received the phone call announcing his death. One of Dream's fellow comrades called me while I was in the shower. The water from the showerhead merged with my tears, but it could not cloak the sorrow I felt. What made Dream so special wasn't only that he was a talented artist, but that he was an all around beautiful person. He attracted you with his intricate lettering styles and held your interest with his ideas and philosophies on life. Dream's artistic success spanned the globe, and many gave him recognition for being a versatile stylist. None of that fame ever went to Dream's head. He remained a humble servant to the masses. Dream didn't mind choppin' it up with a new jack toy, sharing and exchanging ideas...I should know because during the early 80s I used to be one.

"Most writers are doing the fame game, getting up as much as you can, pushing you and only you. Once you get past that stage it gets to a point - depending upon what type of individual you are and the type of consciousness you've grown up around - where you owe it to your people to drop some type of consciousness."

Dream had a history for being politically active in hip hop. He participated in programs against police brutality (No Justice No Peace '92), "Take Back Telegraph" (Revolution Books '88), Mumia 911, Amerikan Terrorism, and the list goes on.

Consciousness through hip hop art was a concept Dream began to refine. His last gallery show, Meditations for Self-Determination, which opened a week after his death, was a memorial to the soldiers who have rallied to the call for revolution. That same revolutionary attitude followed him throughout his travels. I can remember how excited Dream was after returning from New York last year. Dream and fellow artist Spie had been invited to paint in a New York gallery, where they would rock a mural that championed the demands of the "Million Youth March." The mural reflected contemporary causes: "we couldn't save Malcolm, but we can save Mumia." It also spoke to the everyday struggles of "raising warriors in a concrete jungle." He repeatedly emphasized how honored he was to be able to dwell in the midst of his New York influences, Kase 2, T-Kid, phase 2, Shame and Dondi (RIP).



Mike Dream's life was that of someone committed to excellence who "did it for the love."

This legacy of hip hop activism should inspire all of us to take up the task of being liberators for the struggling oppressed masses. As members of the hip hop community it is our responsibility to maintain the integrity of our culture. One way to do this is through historical documentation, using history to educate the youth around the guiding principles these street soldiers fought for.

The circumstances surrounding Dream's death were created by capitalism. I charge capitalism with the deaths of all those who have fallen in the struggle. This sick, barbaric, anti-human system has plagued society with greed, gross individualism, and disrespect of life - all ingredients that nurture a murderous atmosphere. If we intend to end this vicious cycle, hip hop will have to be organized on every front to bring this capitalist Babylon down. As Malcolm X, one of Dream's heroes, said, "Our objective is complete freedom, justice and equality."

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# dead

# prez

Russell Shoatz III: music director BLU's interview by this is dead prez like you've never heard them before.

>>> an exclusive



ITS  
BIGGER  
THAN  
HIP  
HOP



it's bigger  
than hip hop,  
and it's bigger  
than religion.  
we're talking  
about justice  
and freedom,  
we gonna get it  
-M1

Brandishing a "Power to the People" party line that would make both Chuck D and Che Guevara proud, raptivist revolutionaries Dead Prez are on a mission to get us all free. Here they talk to BLU's music director Russell Shoatz III.

**Russell:** Just listening to your album, two songs stick out to me. One is "Hip Hop" and the other is "Mind Sex". And, of course, those two songs are "more commercial" than a song like "I'm a African". Do you see any contradiction between being a politically minded "underground" group and making commercial music?

**Stic:** We are out to challenge the definition of what's commercial. Until we have organized a code to go by, all the opportunists can constantly decide, "Oh, that's selling out", or "That's real." What we trying to do in those songs and our albums in general is use the commercial, which just means the medium of the hip hop business, to promote revolutionary ideas and revolutionary change and honest expression. In "Hip Hop" I think we did that. We talked about all the contradictions we have as a group with this industry. In "Mind Sex" we try to promote the idea that there's more to relationships than "I'm just going to fuck you." Knowing the systematic oppression of our people, and our sisters in particular, and knowing the effects that that has on our self esteem, on our psychology, on our relations, on our respect, we gotta bring something different. Not "I get what I need off you and that's it." Our hope is that before this shit is over you goin' be bouncing the pure revolution. So then they gonna say, "Freedom is commercial."

**Russell:** So "Mind Sex" is a "revolutionary love song"?

**Stic:** To make love, to express love, if that ain't what it's about, then what the hell we willing to die for? We don't wanna separate making love and interaction from the movement because then I don't really think too many people want to fight and die for no kind of struggle like that, if it ain't about doin' the things that we're naturally free to do, free to express. To make love means that you have to love and understand love. And that's what the basis of revolution is about. Who ever said that love ain't part of the revolution?

**Russell:** What would y'all say to young rappers that are conscious, trying to get out?

**Stic:** No matter where you're at, no matter what you're doing, our basic problem is oppressor versus oppressed, in all realms. And it's not different in music. If you try to put so-called conscious music out and you're trying to do it through a label, make sure that shit is banging, and make sure you talking about what you know. Because you testing it in the real world. So ultimately you don't need a label. A label is only one vehicle to get it out, but it can't be stopped if you organize.

**Russell:** There's a question especially in the "activist" music community about which artists are really down. What do y'all think about that?

**M1:** It's gotta be real. It's gotta be real to you. You can't just jump on anything. It ain't just about rap, I'm not consumed with hip hop. But I can tell you, if you're puttin' something out that's real to you, then I can't get into no labels about who can be defined as conscious and who's right and who's wrong. You don't even have to be talkin' about it in your music to be doing something in the community. I think that stands more to the question than putting together some raps, which may or may not be trendy enough to make it wherever you wanna make it to. But you put together a program that sticks. Or you put more power in the hands of your community. So I judge not until I see the action.

**Russell:** So it's about action speaking louder than words.

**M1:** Instead of these people talking about what's conscious and who's conscious, I think we need to build a revolutionary culture that gives us a guide to go by. If you got enough time to be talking about who's conscious, we gotta pioneer that in our revolutionary culture to make it important.

**Russell:** A couple of weeks ago I saw you at a show with Ricanstruction, another struggle-oriented band on the underground political punk scene. Do you feel, as hip hop artists, it's important to cross perceived boundaries?

**Stic:** Definitely. And the only way you can do that is if you get in different places with different types of people, different looking people, different views from people. And you have that exchange. And that gets fed back into our show and into the songs we gonna do next. It just help us develop a more collective spirit in the music.

**Russell:** Historically, the Black Nationalist and the Puerto Rican independence movements have had important links. I'd like to hear your thoughts on the Puerto Rican liberation struggle?

**M1:** Well, basically on the Puerto Rican question, I want us united. That is our number 1 problem. I keep having to go back to the basic problem that is going to confront us around the world - when I say "us" I mean African people, which also includes Puerto Rican people - the fact that we're dealing with the colonial question. We're dealing with the central question of oppressor vs. oppressed. Exploitation. That's the basis and root of all the problems.

**Russell:** Do you see a correlation between what's going on in Vieques, Puerto Rico and what's happening in the Black American diaspora?

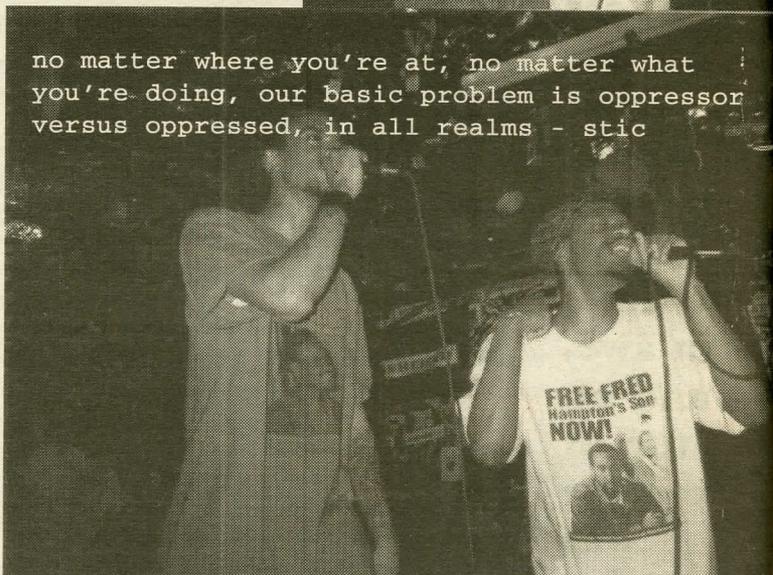
**M1:** Now, Vieques more than anything else is a case that exposes how they're basically warring on us. Vieques has been used for bombing drills by the US Navy, which uses Puerto Rico as kinda like a sewage dump for their oppression. It's a continuation of the same war that's going on in Brooklyn and Black ghettos all over the world. Vieques really stands out because the island is actually being bombed. Along with the environmental hazards, you can see how they use our communities to be the testing grounds for the latest tool that's going to keep oppressing us.

**Russell:** Any thoughts on the situation with brother H. Rap Brown, the Imam down in Atlanta who's receiving a bad rap for a crime he didn't commit?

**M1:** From the horse's mouth, he said this is a conspiracy, OK. And I think if you are informed about what happened to the Black Liberation Movement during the 60s - I'm not talking about the civil rights movement, which are two separate movements, Black Power made a whole 'nother call. They even made H. Rap Brown laws, if you go out of state and you speak somewhere and you fire up the people and they burn down the city ... they made H. Rap Brown laws that say you can't even go out of state and talk. I think that's part of the whole Gestapo law that they used to govern the US. So I think Rap, or what they call him now, Jamil Al-Amin, he was still victim of the same kind of counter insurgency. Same way Huey P. Newton was a victim of the counter insurgency through crack cocaine. H. Rap Brown is still living through COINTELPRO when they hunt him down and victimize him. They say he shot at some pigs, you know, which of course we can't believe their propaganda unit. I believe that they're using this case again to assassinate the Black Power movement.

**Russell:** Moving to another topic, based on some of your lyrics, there's a question of where you stand on the subject of religion?

**Stic:** The first thing I say when you ask that



photos by Russell Shoatz III

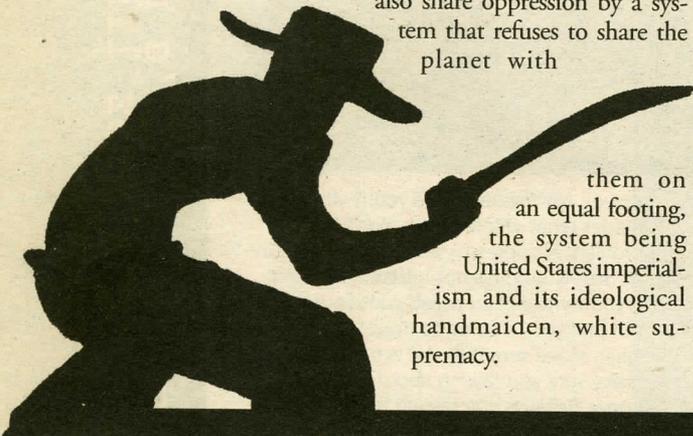
# ARM IN ARM

Russell "Maroon" Schoatz is a Black Liberation Army prisoner of war serving 2 life sentences in SCI Greene's Super Maximum Security prison in Pennsylvania.

The Black Liberation struggle in the United States and the Puerto Rican independence struggle share history, geography, a common oppression, and are inextricably dependent on each other for support of each's desires to be self-determining.

The Puerto Ricans – Boricuas – and Blacks in the U.S. are in reality a part of the same people that were uprooted from the African continent five hundred years ago and forcibly transplanted to this hemisphere. In Puerto Rico the Africans were forced to bear children for their European/Spanish slavemasters, and many of them mixed with the indigenous Tainos. Similarly, in the U.S. the Africans were forced to bear children for their various European slavemasters, and they also mixed with the numerous Native peoples of North America. Each group was stripped of its original languages and religions and forced to adopt those of their European owners. They both, however, were able to cling to various aspects of their original African cultures, while simultaneously developing new cultural forms that mixed all of these elements and today both groups have their own distinct cultures. They also share oppression by a system that refuses to share the planet with

them on an equal footing, the system being United States imperialism and its ideological handmaiden, white supremacy.



Every man got a right to decide his own destiny and in this judgement there is no partiality.

Over time thousands of these Boricuas were to migrate from Puerto Rico to the United States, and many thousands were born in the United States. In the urban areas of the northeast and midwest they occupied communities always in close proximity to their Black cousins. Despite the language barriers, they seemed to coexist well, even to the point of a high level of voluntary mixing. They also maintained empathy for the conditions they witnessed each other suffering under.

The Blacks struggled against their oppression in the U.S. for hundreds of years, and in Puerto Rico the Boricuas strove to extract themselves from the brutality of their Spanish/European overlords. In time the Spanish were to be replaced by the United States' imperialist powers, and the Boricuas continued their struggle under their great patriot Don Pedro Albizu Campos.

In the United States the close proximity of Blacks and Puerto Ricans lead to working alliances designed to upgrade their conditions in the ghettos, barrios, schools, and universities they occupied and attended. In the halls of government there were Black and "Hispanic" caucuses, while on the streets you had the Black Panthers and its counterpart in the Young Lords. In some cases the participants operated in both camps, as ably represented by Black Liberation Army combatants Francisco and Gabriel Torres. Today the compañeros from the Puerto Rican independen-

## dead prez cont. from p.43

question is, religion is dope. Religion has been used like they use dope, like they use alcohol, like they use all the crack. On the other hand, spirituality is hope. Because it gives us the ability to have faith that we can change our consciousness to the point that we can be self disciplined, we can be self governing, we can make the sacrifices, make the steps and take the steps to really get control of our own lives. 'Cuz when you break a people's spirit or you break a people's community or their own autonomy, you don't just say "I'm holding you hostage with a gun." It's not that simple. But you break they're whole understanding of what's happening.

**M1:** Like "We don't have to control them. They do the damage to themselves."

**Russell:** So they set you up to be your own jailer.

**Stic:** Because you say "You doin' it to yourself," over the time when people keep hearing that, it starts sounding like, "Yeah, I'm doing it to myself." And don't realize, "No, this is an orchestrated thing happening. And it's somebody doing it to us."

**Russell:** So how does the prisoner free himself?

**Stic:** What can fight that aspect of our oppression is to unite your will in the principles of the collective. From my own experience I know that's no easy task. I recognize the depth just in myself of being able to say, "We need to share this, and it's

only a little bit, and I'm hungry." You know, you ain't going to just tell me, "I read Huey so now I know how to share." Hell no. Specially in a scarce resources situation that oppressed people live in. What people look for in religion is very powerful and it's very valid, but what we get out of it don't do shit. So look at the things that are for the common good. Develop your courage and all that kind of shit, learn that once we were warriors. And warriors can't separate their beliefs from their commitment to defense and development of the community.

**Russell:** So religion is the "opiate of the masses" if we don't fully understand it?

**M1:** Religion as a whole has been a divisive tool. They came and got us out of Africa in the name of their God. Religion has been used to divide, to ordain oppression around the world. That is the dope that Stic is talking about that helps us find a little solace in our misery, in the oppression that has been heaped on us. They took away the real resource and they said, "Hey man, but you got your religion. Just go and pray, it's gonna be all right." I think that it's the opposite. As human beings, definitely as African people, we've always been very spiritual people in tune with earth, with our natural selves, a collective feeling all the way down to the minute details in life, which makes us realize we're part of a whole. It makes you humble yourself to the greater. We can use that spirituality to

# WITH ARMS

So arm in arm with arms we  
fight this little struggle,  
'cause that's the only way  
we can overcome a little  
trouble.

- Bob Marley

dence movement and New Afrikan liberation movement celebrate their victory in winning the freedom of the recently released Puerto Rican prisoners of war. Both groups continue to rally the Black and Puerto Rican masses in order to force the government to release the remaining Black and Puerto Rican political prisoners and POWs, as well as their white anti-imperialist comrades.

A most satisfying and potentially far reaching development is the growing alliance between the most advanced elements amongst Black and Puerto Rican performers within the "hip hop nation." Their growing awareness, sophistication, and dedication to alleviating the oppressive conditions their communities suffer under may prove to be a weapon that's capable of educating and mobilizing more energy than anything else available to either group.

Self-determination and independence for the Blacks in the U.S. and the collective Puerto Rican people can only hope to be obtained, consolidated, and maintained within a larger dynamic capable of defending these peoples from United States' imperialism/white su-

premacy and its cultural antipathy to "others". And, contrary to popular belief, this diaspora encompasses the entire Caribbean, much of South and Central America, parts of the African continent, most of the Dravidian speaking peoples of India and South Asia, much of the South Pacific island chains, and the (so-called) Aborigines of Australia. For those who cannot follow my reasoning, I can only suggest that either you've been mis-educated or are not educated on this subject at all.

However, the gradual pulling together of this "Pan-African" entity will do a great deal to begin to rectify many of the ills we find in the world today. Nor does such a dynamic seek to rob anyone of their own distinct characteristics and set itself up to oppress other parts of humanity.

The future is never guaranteed to work out as anyone suggests, but I do know that the Black and Puerto Rican peoples have the potential to eradicate their oppression and move on towards building a better life for their peoples and the rest of the world.

*"/N SOLIDARITY + STRUGGLE"* Russell "Maroon" Shoatz  
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be the unseen man. To be that one extra man in the room when we ready to kick the pig's ass, that we can call on that man to come out, in the spirit of our freedom. I think if we tap into that aspect of spirituality - and everyone included no matter what faith you may subscribe to - I think if we could tap into that freedom fighter, we'll be able to use this whole phenomenon of spirituality to help in our total cause.

**Russell:** Can hip hop serve as an alternative "religion" for the masses?

**Stic:** Hip hop ain't innocent either, including all us rap niggas that's talking about how "we need to build a revolution." Don't let me just talk about "We have the way." You make sure you're testin' what we're puttin' forth and you make sure I'm not talking out my ass, the same way I'm gonna make sure you ain't talking out your ass. So we can go forward. You know, that's the whole thing man, we need to stay humble. We're all in this same fucked up condition. And that's what gives us the ability to see greater than the limitations and to see the unity that can push us through.

**Russell:** So it's "bigger than hip hop"?

**M1:** It's bigger than hip hop, and it's bigger than religion. Anywhere I've been, as long as we're fightin' for the same thing, if I meet a Muslim he'll tell me according to what I'm doin' in the world I'm a Muslim. If I meet a Christian he'll be

like, "Oh, you have such Christian ways and you're a Christian." The Rastas will tell me I'm a Rasta. If we're going down the right path then ultimately we gonna get there, because if we're talking about justice and freedom, then we gonna get it, no matter where you coming from.

**Russell:** Talk about how that ties in to you and your sister bringing a seed into the world. And dealing with the situation of having that seed passing and becoming an ancestor.

**M1:** OK. Basically Akeema is my mate as well as a member of the Uhuru Movement and the Black Liberation Movement as a whole, she is a revolutionary, she is a socialist, an African internationalist. I've been developing this relationship and we conceived a child, we conceived a child last year in 99, and he was born last fall. But he also passed at the same time. They called it stillbirth. His name is Itumba Mbulisi Uhuru. That whole process, not just the birth and the passing, which was because that spirit recreated itself - it's not like it's gone. Even just the energy that it came with and the way its power moved our lives or that Itumba brought here to me, helped to shape a whole vision of manhood and womanhood. The whole experience was ten months. Don't be fooled, it's not nine months to a pregnancy either, it's ten months. So through all the ten months you basically figuring out how you gonna be able to live on forever, because that's what reproduction does. To go through that process brings a new aspect to liberation. It's something that I

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45 BLU 8



## dead prez cont. starts p. 42

even admire about our leaders like Malcolm, like Chairman Omali Yeshitela, definitely Fred. And even outside of them circles, people like Muhammad Ali. Just to have a person on the block you know saying they are fathers, that you look at the women as mothers.

I'd also like to say that for Itumba, so everybody knows, even though he's not here physically, he's not gone. He came and he served a purpose, a purpose which I think is greater than I'll even recognize and I'm continuing to recognize for myself. It was very humbling. I think he did his job. He did do his job. I'm glad that he doesn't have to live under this oppression. He was born through a revolutionary relationship and I think that's how we have to build and cultivate all the relationships that we have.

**Stic:** I'd just like to say too, man, and I haven't figured it all out yet, but it was like a growth period for me too. I look at you, I respect you, you know, and I have a certain kind of revolutionary love and respect for you. So when that situation went down it said to me that I have to be able to respond, we have to step forth. A revolutionary code, a revolutionary definition for when a comrade loses whoever in their family. How do we deal with it? Outside of me saying "Damn, Mutulu, blah blah blah, damn," you know what I mean? That ain't good enough really. And that's what I was basically reduced to. Later come the flowers and all of that and all of that.

We have a African tradition of dealing with it, we need to be more in touch with that. It was a time when unexpectedly we had to embrace that that's a part of life too. We have to realize that we are cut off from understanding of death, we cut off from our appreciation of it. Like M said, because Itumba was created from a revolutionary relationship, the leadership in that relationship was able to recognize that and gave it a ... I don't know what to call it, I don't want to call it a funeral, because it wasn't no funeral, you know. But a communal way to acknowl-

edge what had occurred. And put it in the context of something greater than a loss.

**M1:** Right.

**Stic:** And like, I think that was – even though it might not of came from the particular tribe in Africa, I think it was truly the African understanding of the cycle of life and death. And it helped us all – I was motivated more than I was depressed.

**Russell:** Right.

**M1:** Yeah, I was too.

**Stic:** I just give thanks and I think we have to do all of the good things in our lives and the things that we wish didn't have to be there, if we can find a way to revolutionize all of these things, they all benefit.

**M1:** Right, and we did have a ceremony, and we called it a home-going, because he was going home. And we gave thanks to the ancestors and we, once again, we laid at the doorstep of imperialism the blame for all the things that happen in African people's lives. And that it makes the enemy the focus, and not what individually we did wrong or right. It lays the blame is the slavemaster who doesn't allow us to have the correct medical, or who has provided the incorrect medical ceremonies, health precautions, and all that goes with it.

**Stic:** Psychological, stresses on the body, all that shit.

**M1:** Everything is part of that.

# LET'S GET FREE

## LATINAS IN HIP HOP

# rocking riqueñas

## diana of dynasty rockers

interview by Raquel Z. Rivera

Digging into the roots of breaking, it's inevitable to bump into one of its sources, called "rocking" by those who developed it during the 70s. Today, it's usually known as "uprocking" or "Brooklyn rock" in honor of the region where it came up. The Brooklyn neighborhood known as Bushwick was one of the places where rocking was most passionately cultivated.

When talking about rocking's history, people always seem to mention a girl called Diana that was down with Dynasty Rockers. Diana Figueroa grew up in the mostly Puerto Rican neighborhood of Bushwick, and was such a good dancer that she was known to dance "as good as a guy" and "burn" males and females alike. Diana was not only one of the few females that danced in this male-dominated zone; it seems that she was also the only openly lesbian dancer. And she got plenty of heat for both things. But the girl could BURN.

"I was thirteen, fourteen years old when I first seen the dance and I said, "Wow, I like that dance, I gotta learn." In the early seventies it was gangs in the neighborhood and they used to dance. The older men used to take out congas and the guys from the gangs just used to dance.

There was no groups back then. It was just one on one. The music would play and they would make two long lines and everybody would get on line and just dance against each other. We were freestyling when we were just getting into the music, then when the break part used to come, that's when we used to start dancing against each other, burning. Whatever the bests say, you do. Whatever the record did with the cymbals and the music, you follow with your hands, with your feet. The dancing, that was a part of my life, my era, upbringing. That's what I can say kept me away from things that were going on in the street. I didn't have time to hang out and do drugs and get into a scene like that. I loved to dance too much. We would practice every single day. We would get out of school, drop our books and run straight for practice. That's what we did. We would go to the park and practice, and dance. That was our life."

2FLY

## graffiti grrrillas interview by Emily Fernandez

We all know the (in)famous names: Seen, West, but with the exception of say, Lady Pink, there's a serious void when it comes to womyn on the scene. That void becomes even greater when we start talking about Latinas who are, or were, ever involved in the movement. So it's always refreshing to run into a Latina who, in these days of pseudo-

street advertising, and "commercialized" canvases, chooses to embrace the

art of the "outlaw". Maria Castillo, aka 2Fly, is a 22 years Old Latina graffiti writer from Queens, New York, who became influenced and inspired by the legendary graff writers of the past and began to read the writing on the wall... and write it too.

**Have you ever done your "outlaw art" in the streets or on subway or freight trains, or on non-permission walls?**

Not as much as I would have liked to, but yes, I bombed with other writers from Queens. We would try and catch walls that you can see from the 7 train. I would also flip the ads on the train and draw one of my characters. It's funny, I had a cool moms. Talk about female influences: she actually went bombing with me once on a roof top across from my high school.

**There don't tend to be as many woman involved in street bombing; when you go out do you find that you're treated differently because you're a woman?**

No, I've never been treated differently, although they may look out for me more...but I think that would be with any good friend. Perhaps I haven't had enough experience with street bombing where I can make a distinction. Either way, I usually try to come off better than what they may expect... that's the fun part.

**Graffiti seems to have taken a back seat to rap within today's hip hop scene.**

But graffiti still has an impact within the hip hop nation. You see it on the logos of rap artist's cds, tags as a type font on the layouts of many hip hop magazines. The mural backdrops at hip hop shows and events, the graffiti characters on flyers for hip hop shows.

You can still find its elements almost everywhere you have a hip hop scene.

**But at least in the above ground, or more commercial, hip hop scene, graffiti, along with breaking, seems to be sometimes perceived as a kind of old school relic, like a Kangol hat or a pair of adidas sneakers...people wear them to be down, or old school, but they're stripped of their impact or relevance.**

That's because no-one has been able to make a sufficient impact on people with his art form in a commercial or entertainment kind of way. Art is art, it's hung on the walls of museums; people's homes, placed in galleries, but as graffiti

artists we need to develop some concepts where we can take it to another level.

**Such as?**

Well, through performance art like some are doing, through movies and magazines, which many are doing and have done...but if we want to blow it up like center stage we need to begin collaborating and building on these ideas.

**Latinas tend to be under represented within the hip hop nation. Why do you think that is?**

Unfortunately, there aren't many of us. And those that do exist ain't doing anything powerful enough to help build with other women. Latinas need to think like Lilith Fair on a hip hop scale.

**Where do you see the place of woman in hip hop?**

Doing everything a man can, rap, break, graffiti, dj and more. But we need support from the communities, from school, from home. We need programs where women can think of themselves as being somebody.

**Who are some of your influences in terms of your art and graffiti in particular?**

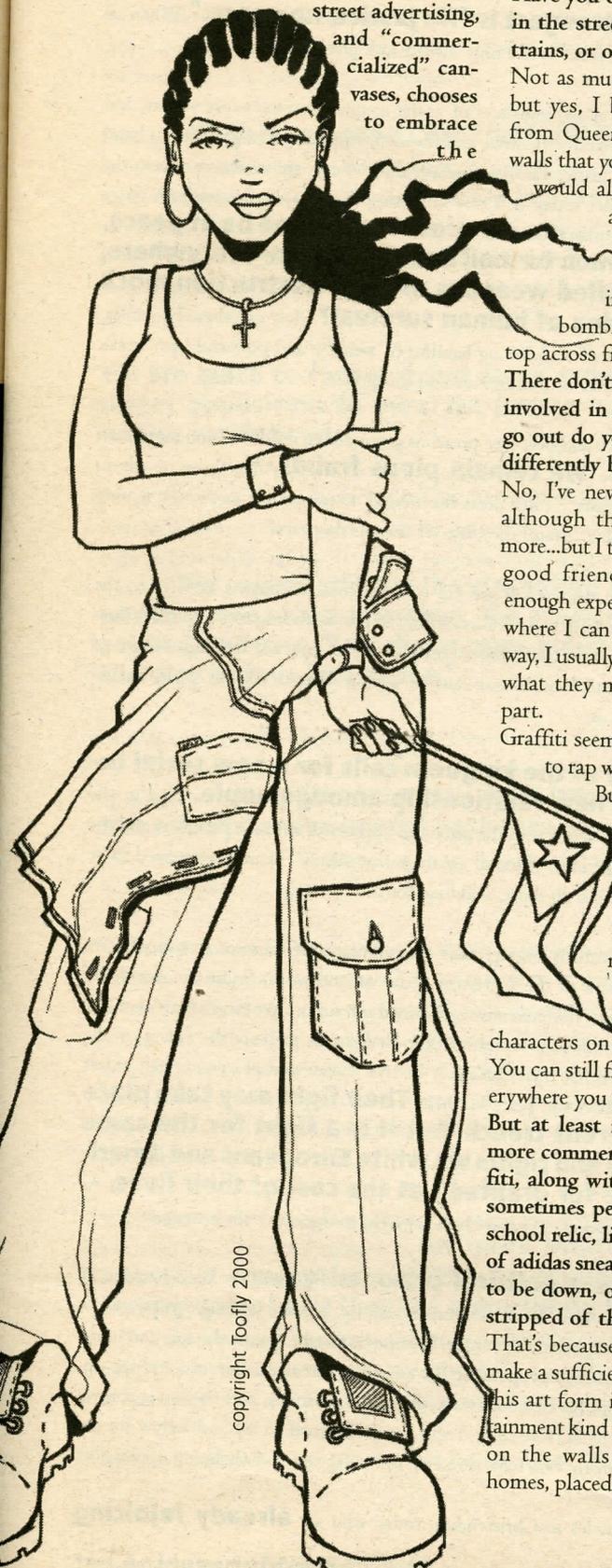
Blk market, Twist, Frost, Kaws, Mode 2, Espo, Nato, Sabe, Jean-Michel Basquiat (samo), ... It's funny how there are no women in there... That's what needs to change!

**Where do you see the place of graffiti in terms of the mainstream art world?**

I think graffiti is a huge influence in the mainstream, because you can catch indications of it everywhere from TV ads, print, fashion, movies, giant drippy tags by coca cola on the side of a building. These huge companies have discovered it's graphic in-your-face element and are rushing to take a piece of it like it's the next big thing... again. They have art shows now where you can find famous artists who were in fact graff artists. But, of course, they will take it, like they take everything else, and call it their own.

**Do you think hip hop could be more conscious? More political?**

Definitely, we have the power to reach many more now about our situations and struggles. We need more artists like Dead Prez, Mos Def; more cutting edge magazines that focus on graffiti and alternative forms of art, like Stress magazine, for instance...we need more. We need a planet. Is graffiti a political or revolutionary act? Graffiti can be political, it can be revolutionary. It's a powerful form of rebellion to use if you want to say something that needs to be said. Imagine, huge, on a wall on the side of a big building, written with roll on paint in bright white letters: GIULIANI SUCKS!



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# justice then peace

Te alabo por mil veces  
porque fuiste rebelde  
luchando noche y dia  
contra la injusticia  
de la humanidad.

**Lord, receive  
a thousand  
thanks  
That you, too,  
are a rebel.**

**That day and night  
you wage your  
constant  
struggle**

**Against injustice.  
that you fight  
all inhumanity  
Towards our  
fellow man.**

Words from Misa Campesina Nicaragüense, also known as "The Mass to the God of the Poor, by the Poor." This mass was composed by Carlos Mejía Goday in 1975 and was strongly influenced by a visit with Father Ernesto Cardenal in Solentiname, where the principles of liberation theology were being applied to real life. Liberation theology states that the Catholic Church must be involved in the fight for political and economic justice in the third world. By the 80s, the Catholic hierarchy started opposing liberation theology because of its radical doctrine and use of Marxist rhetoric.

For more information on liberation theology, read Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation* and Phillip Berryman's *True Religious Roots of Rebellion*.

**Of all the slogans I have heard at demonstrations and rallies over the last decades, one of the simplest and strongest is "No justice, no peace."** When all is said and done, peace is real only insofar as it gives birth to justice.

In the same way as the injustices of social inequality, oppression, slavery, and war go hand in hand with strife and division, so peace must go hand in hand with justice, for justice flourishes where these things are overcome. Given the state of our planet today, it is not surprising that people dismiss both peace and justice as utopian foolishness. **How can anyone be at peace, they ask, when turmoil and anguish are everywhere, and stockpiled weapons of mass destruction mock the very idea of human survival?** How can there be justice, when the whims of a shrinking handful of wealthy and powerful men wreak havoc with the lives of millions around the globe?

Unless the justice and peace we preach is grounded in deeds, it is no more than an empty phrase. **We remain pious frauds**, like those of whom Jeremiah complains, "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say; yet there is no peace."

On the other hand, even if we fail over and over in staying faithful to the vision of God's kingdom, and in seeking to live according to its spirit, it does not change the fact that God is still a God of peace. His reign is one of justice, truth and love. If our faith is a sham that is not his fault, but an indictment on us.

**The peace of the kingdom calls for a new social order and a new relationship among people.** That is why Jesus urges us to stand with the poor and oppressed, with the prisoners and the sick. It is why he says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Therefore we need to be open to work with all those who long for it.

There are individuals among those who embrace the cause of justice who are not peacemakers in the Christian sense of the word. Some are decidedly unpeaceful, and a few even advocate armed revolution. Yet even where we differ as to goals and means, we must acknowledge that they are the voices of the oppressed, and that there can never be true justice and peace on earth unless there is also justice and peace for them. **Their fight may take place in a different trench, but it is a fight for the same freedoms and rights we white Europeans and Americans take for granted - at the cost of their lives.** As long as we ignore this fact, we have no right to denounce their struggle.

**Jesus was a political prisoner** who was executed because he fought against the evils of the Roman Empire, because he fought the greed of the money changers in the temple, because he fought against the sins and injustices of his time. Jesus spoke up for the poor, the meek, the sick, and the oppressed. So did his first followers, the early Christians, and they were thrown into lions' dens because of it. I too am determined to try and follow the example of so many who have stood up in the face of overwhelming oppression.

There are parties in Christendom today who are **already rejoicing**

**that they will be transfigured and float up to heaven. But that is not the way it will be.** It is time to take up a task in which we are the first to be judged, not the first to receive a sofa in heaven. For only those who are truly first - first to stand before the Savior in judgment - can become tools to further his righteousness.

Frankly, **I think many good Christians will be surprised** to see who is there when the angels gather the "elect" from the corners of the earth. The older I get and the more deeply I see the enormity of injustice in our society, the more convinced I am that if Jesus really came for those "who hunger and thirst for justice and righteousness," then his chosen ones must include the homeless, the prisoners, the outcast, and the forgotten - the wretched of the earth.

**We are quick to forget it, but Jesus' values stand in direct opposition to ours. His justice turns human justice on its head.**

For us who claim to be followers of Christ, the use of violence or force cannot even be considered as a means to achieve justice. Yet that does not give us the right to buttonhole others, to coax or persuade them to agree with our way of thinking. **We cannot address the struggling third-world peasant, the urban anarchist, the policeman, or the soldier, and say, "Lay down your weapons and go the way of love and peace."**

Faith is not given to everybody, nor is it everyone's concern at every moment. Even if it were, it might not be apparent in a way that we could understand. In my experience, **the answers to life's most important questions do not arrive in neat packages.** Sometimes they do not come to us at all; it is we who must go after them, by trial and error, and with lonely struggle.

In Psalm 85 we read, "Justice and peace shall kiss; truth shall rise up, and righteousness smile down from heaven." If we have faith in this promise - if we believe that these words can become reality, not only in some glorious hereafter, but on this earth - then we must be willing to risk everything. We must reject injustice in every form, whether economic exploitation, social inequality, racial division, or political oppression. Yet we must also reject all violence, from military service and armed revolution to police brutality and the abuse of women and children.

The justice of God's kingdom is based on something very different from the balancing of interests or rights. It is **far more radical than the humanist conceptions of liberty, equality and fraternity; more basic than the opportunity to compete.** It is a justice born of love, and it is rooted in our willingness to die for each other. Unless we are actually ready to do this, to lay down life itself for the sake of our brothers, all our talk about peace is meaningless.

excerpted from *Seeking Peace*, available from Plough 800.521.8011

**You are the God  
of the poor,  
The God who is  
human and**

**simple;**

**The God who sweats  
in the streets,  
The God with the  
weather-beaten**

**face.**

**That is why  
I can talk to You**

**The way I talk with  
my people:  
Because you are  
God,  
the laborer,  
Christ,  
the working man.**

Vos sos el Dios de los pobres,  
el Dios humano y sencillo  
el Dios que suda en la calle,  
el Dios de rostro curtido  
por eso es que te hablo yo  
porque sos el Dios obrero  
el Cristo trabajador.



# Although eleven Puerto Rican political prisoners were freed last year, six remain behind bars.

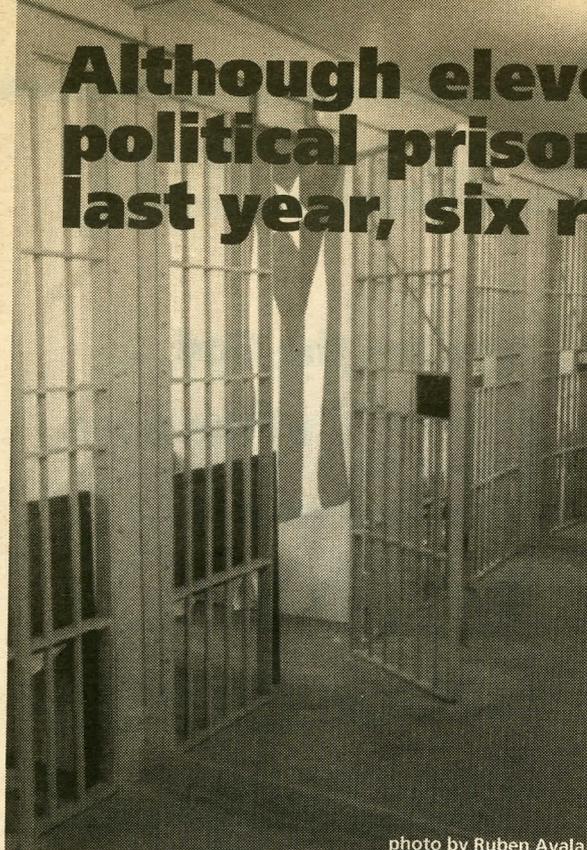


photo by Ruben Ayala

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## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

jim weeks

### Nutrition Facts

**Food has a** special place in our lives. It provides nourishment. It provides life itself, life flowing up from Mother Earth and sustaining our lives.

**Even more importantly,** eating together builds relationships, strengthens family and community ties, and contributes to love. Sharing food is sharing our lives. An awareness of this is still very strong in some cultures but has nearly been wiped out in the fast-paced silicon-based "modern" world.

**Some can still** participate in the process of growing and preparing food but the opportunities to do so are becoming fewer as less people are involved in agriculture. Factory processed foods, frozen foods, and fast foods are becoming more and more common. When I microwave a bowl of Hormel chili or scarf a Big Mac, how connected to life do I feel?

**Food is for eating.** Not many statements are more obvious than this. In fact, it is so obvious that we have to think twice before we see the problem. The reality is that in our culture food is grown and prepared for sale. Food that is not likely to turn a profit is usually destroyed to prevent people from eating it.

**There is another** twist to the capitalist perversion of the meaning of food. Food has become political power. Pyotr Kropotkin, writing nearly 100 years ago, identified food as a key concern for revolutionaries. He detailed how the lack of food contributed to the suppression of the Revolution in France more than once. He pointed out that future revolutions will fail unless access to food is in the hands of the people and a just and equitable distribution of food is assured.

**With this watchword  
of "Bread for All" the  
Revolution will triumph.**

Pyotr Kropotkin in  
*The Conquest of Bread*

**What does it mean** that giant agribusinesses are getting an increasingly tight stranglehold on food production and distribution? If you control someone's food supply, doesn't that eventually mean that you have complete control over that person?

#### What you can do about it:

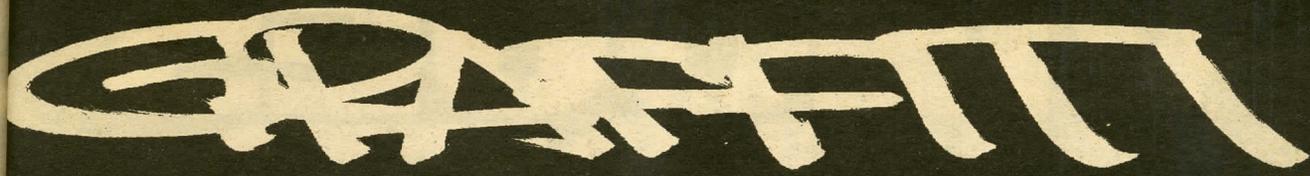
*grow food* – this is tough and few people have the chance, but it's worth it. If you don't have a chance to grow food, then at least prepare meals from ingredients that still have some life in them.

*save food from the dumpster* – convince grocers and restaurants to contribute leftovers to community programs or dive dumpsters on your own.

*share food with others* – contribute food to an existing program or start your own neighborhood program.

*make time to eat with others* – eating together strengthens families and communities. Eat together with those you love and with those who share your beliefs about peace and justice. This can also be tough because of people's different schedules, but if you make the sacrifice you will do more than just feed your face.

freedom of art



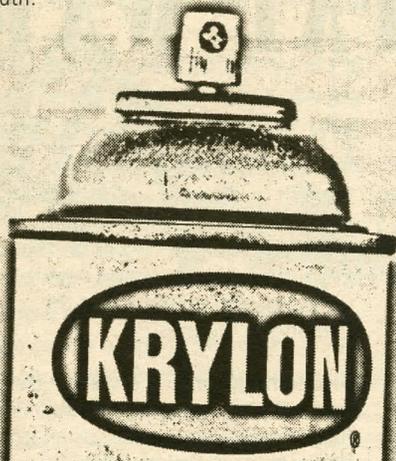
# THE ART OF RESISTANCE

- graffi•ti \ gra'fed•(.)e\ n, pl 1. The first graphic art (i.e. Native American cave paintings, African Egyptian hieroglyphics, Mayan Tikal temples) 2. Messages or slogans often of a social or political nature scrawled on walls of public buildings.
- 3. An outlaw art for those without a voice

In the 70s a generation of ghetto youth grows up hearing stories about the struggles of the 60s and understands that the fight that the generation before them has fought should bring change, but it doesn't. The shitstem had neglected to follow through with the goods and instead of solving the problems, it changes their shape. Racism, sexism, drugs, crime, health care, housing, unemployment, and education continued to run rampant through the Black and Puerto Rican communities. A collective consciousness begins to take over among the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, negated and neglected, ostracized and oppressed ghetto youth of these communities. By the late 70s the cultural ghetto (r)evolution of hip hop gives a re-birth to graffiti. In the despair and decay of these ghettos the fuse is lit and the NYC hip hop graffiti scene is about to explode.

A modern graffiti renaissance takes place on the walls, streets, rooftops, trucks, buses, train yards and subway tunnels of NYC. In order to force the shitstem to take notice of those it would like to forget, graffiti artists begin to "tag" their names everywhere. And instead of their real names they create new names for themselves, and in doing so create new identities that the powers that be have no control over. The early NYC hip hop graffiti (r)evolutionary artists had found a way to erase the anonymity of ghetto life on their own terms and at the same time deal a blow to the shitstem. "Tagging" meant you existed and it forced others to accept your existence even though they want to forget you or wanted you uneducated or homeless or in prison or strung out or diseased or dead. Graffiti became this simple act of resistance against a shitstem that was trying to destroy the Black and Puerto Rican ghetto youth.

By the late 70s the cultural ghetto (r)evolution of hip hop gives a re-birth to graffiti.



This modern renaissance of hip hop graffiti became a two-headed monster. The narrowly defined, hard and fast views of the "art world" (made up of white Ivy League educated males) was put to the test. It forced the so called "art world" (segregated from the rest of the world?) to rethink, redefine, and reconsider what art is. The tightly held views of art that they hold so well and take upon themselves to impose upon everyone else are on the verge of total and complete annihilation. The (r)evolutionaries of hip hop graffiti pay no mind to the close minded. This only made the "art world" more nervous as they felt the threat closing in and breathing down their necks. Graffiti was gunning for the shitstem and in the process wound up getting the sterilized, idealized, homogenized, "art world" in its crosshairs as well. And like a true revolution nothing would be the same again. But what the system doesn't understand it tries to destroy, and the war against graffiti is declared.

The early NYC hip-hop graffiti (r)evolutionary artists had found a way to erase the anonymity of ghetto life on their own terms and at the same time deal a blow to the shitstem.

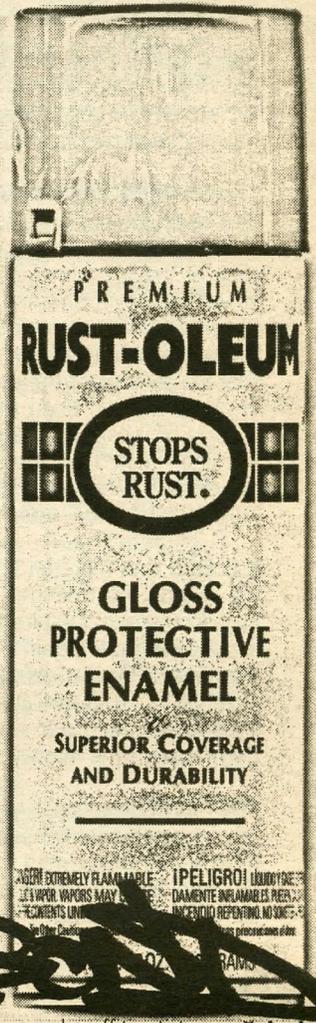


The frontline is the MTA (Mass Transit Authority) of NYC. Small assault teams of graffiti artist band together, form crews and go on bombing missions under the cover of night. Trains get tagged, bombed, burned, and pieced. The insides of trains contain the shrapnel of spray painted and permanent pilot marker tags tagged on top of tags. The trains pull of the yard with their outside "bombed" and "burned" from top to bottom. They roll through the underground subway tunnels and elevated tracks of the five boroughs in "pieces". The system can't keep up. It loses the war on a daily basis.

The graffiti guerilla army is too well armed with ingenious homemade devices, spray paint expropriated from hardware stores and permanent pilot markers liberated from art supply shops. The hip hop graffiti (r)evolution is a socialist one. Graffiti at its core is a not-for-profit art. You can't take home a subway car or a freight train car or that section of the wall or that doorway because those things aren't for sale. Graffiti artists intentionally put their work in and on places that thwarted the ability to buy and sell art. Graffiti artists don't paint for money, just out of a burning desire to exercise freedom. The act of illegally beautifying a public space is one of empowerment, not just for the artist but for the community as a whole. Graffiti artists paint for the same reasons our ancestors did, to let those who will come after us that know we existed and under what conditions in which we existed. The "art world" condemned graffiti because art for them was commerce and commodity. Graffiti threatened the very capitalistic nature the "art world".

Many will say that the graffiti war was lost with the tricknology of newly designed subway cars that resist spray paint and permanent markers, but this is not true. The fire that was started underneath the five boroughs of NYC has spread all over the world. Graffiti is now a worldwide thing from Germany and Japan to Botswana and Brazil.

Graffiti became this simple act of resistance against the shitstem that was trying to destroy the Black and Puerto Rican ghetto youth.



Vagabond is a writer, filmmaker, and graffiti artist.

# VIEQUES UNDER SIEGE!

by Fernando Reals

In 1898, the u.s. invaded the island of Puerto Rico during the so-called "Spanish-American War." The result was an onslaught of u.s. military and corporate exploitation of "the enchanted island," and in 1938, the u.s. navy occupied the two smaller islands of the Puerto Rican archipelago - Culebra and Vieques. Now in the year 2000, we are engaged in struggle with the government and military to free Vieques from the grips of her invader who is destroying her land and killing her people.

After being invaded, Vieques immediately became an important military stronghold. The stolen land has since been used for munitions storage (on the west side) and bombings exercises (on the east side). This has forced Viequeses toward the center of the island or completely off it. A portion of the population was "relocated," that is, given token reparations of \$30 for their land. The majority were simply removed, and the u.s. navy gained control of more than 72% of the land, over 26,000 acres.

The navy also took control of much of the surrounding seas that the Viequeses, a fishing community, have relied on for survival. The fish are now contaminated from

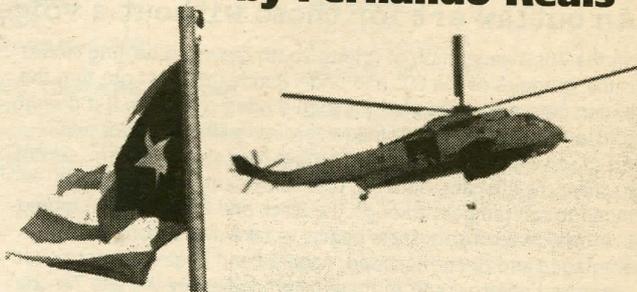


photo Kahilil Jacobs - Fantauzzi

Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras, noted that "the eastern tip of the island constitutes a region with more craters per square kilometer than the moon." These scars were made by the constant artillery drills conducted by NATO. Ten years later the situation has not improved.

Excess navy materials are never disposed of, instead they are detonated or buried in the ground. These metals then oxidize and decompose into contaminants that further endanger the lives of wildlife and humans. In 1988, a Viequesese chemical engineer and former u.s. army artillery officer, Rafael Cruz Perez, identified some

## ENVIRONMENTAL WARFARE

debris caused by naval trainings in the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility on the eastern shore of Vieques. Fishermen constantly risk injury from live munitions that have not exploded as well as toxic residues from the shells.

The u.s. navy and its NATO allies use the island of Vieques as a "war gymnasium." It is quite common for fighter jets and amphibious tanks to do military maneuvers in plain view of the Viequesese community, causing psychological as well as environmental damage. Vieques was used for Desert Storm training and NATO, continues to be used today; u.s. military officials informed the Puerto Rican press that 80 percent of the u.s. ships and fighter jets destroying Kosovo have been trained in Vieques. There are also reports of weapons coated with Depleted Uranium having been tested on the island. This means that there is radioactive debris wherever these shells exploded or fell. This is illegal under international law.

It is said that the island of Vieques was home to some of the world's most beautiful land and seas before the military occupation. Despite the horrible devastation, the violence committed against this island does not go without resistance. Popular resistance freed the smaller island of Culebra in 1975 and it will free Vieques. However, the Viequeses need our support and our solidarity in their fight against the mighty Goliath.

The naval presence in Vieques has had a negative impact on the ecology of the island. Certain sections of Vieques have been transformed from an island paradise to a disaster zone. In 1989, Professor Jose Seguinot Barbosa, director of the Geography Department at the University of

of the contaminants as TNT, NO<sub>3</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, RDX, and Tetryl. These contaminants are seeping into the water and are present at illegal levels in the air. Ten years later, this problem has not been rectified and are causing alarmingly high rates of cancer on the island. Currently, the Environmental Protection Agency is colluding to cover up the ecological mess that the u.s. navy and NATO are creating in Vieques.

Since the killing of a Viequesese civilian guard, David Sanes Rodriguez, on April 19th, 1999, the major Puerto Rican community as well as a larger world community has come together in solidarity with the peace-seekers in Vieques, Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican fishermen and women have created "de-militarized zones; resistance camps where human bodies are the shields against the u.s. bombs. Despite a colonial government filled with lackeys like Puerto Rican Gov. Rosello, the movement to bring peace and justice to Vieques and the world is being generated from the people. The people and their supporters have succeeded in keeping Vieques bomb-free for an entire year. The people have risked their lives and spoken, it's time the government listen.

You can contact the the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques from [www.viequeslibre.com](http://www.viequeslibre.com) or by writing to them at CPRDV • Apartado 1424 • Vieques, PR 00765.

dedicated to & in solidarity with  
Campamento Monte David &  
Campamento Paz y Justicia

Fernando Reals is a Puerto Rican activist.  
[www.blumagazine.net](http://www.blumagazine.net)

activists on "The Eye of London", one of the city's millennial follies.

# Solidari@s

By Martin Mancho

## EUROPEAN TOUR

### ENVIRONMENTAL WARFARE

Around the year 1985, the Spanish government started construction of a dam and reservoir in the Basque Pyrenees. The goal of this project is to supply water to tourist resorts and golf courses on the Mediterranean shore. The result will be **nine demolished villages, six partially flooded ones, the loss of heritage, and destruction of the ancient ways of life based on respect to the Earth..**

The implementation of this project is characterized by corruption and blatant mismanagement of funds. Questionable design of the dam leaves the remaining residents of the valley fearing for their lives, and during the course of the construction the area has been completely militarized. **In protest to** continuous police harassment of the inhabitants, daily road checks, body searches, threats and more than "suspicious" burnings of social centers and private vehicles, **Solidari@s con Itoiz was born.**

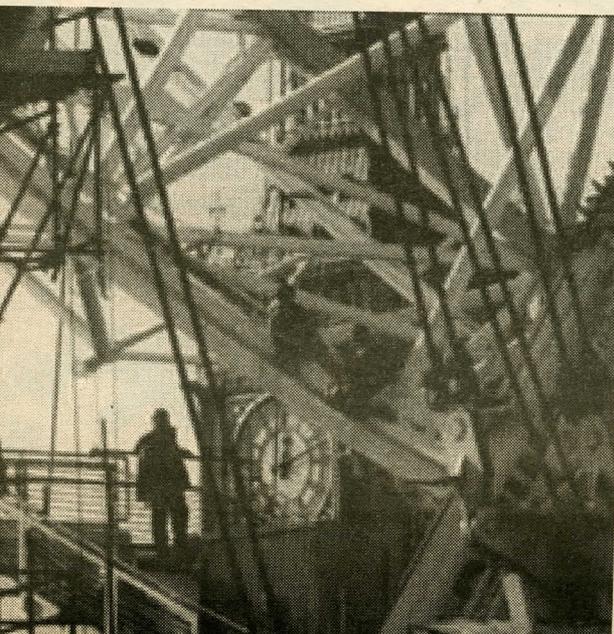
Activists started peaceful, direct action against the construction. They chained themselves to administration buildings, and climbed construction structures on the work site as well as prominent landmarks across Europe. A total of forty such actions took place. Frustrated that the Spanish government was ignoring their protest, on 7 April 1997, eight activists cut the six main cables for the transport of concrete to the top of the dam with disk saws. The eight activists were arrested and brutally beaten. Last year the activists went on trial and were sentenced to five years imprisonment.

**Now, Solidari@s con Itoiz has again gone on tour.** Their first stop was London England, where they climbed The Millennium Wheel, one of the city's most prominent landmarks and the world's largest Ferris wheel. They have since continued their tour, making stops in Germany, Italy and Holland. In Germany they attempted to climb the Brandenburg gate, in Italy they managed to climb the Vatican dome and hang their banners. Their latest action was staged in The Hague. **They interrupted the opening ceremony of the World Water Forum by getting naked and handcuffing themselves to the building, shouting slogans, while** others handcuffed themselves to their chairs and another climbed a wall to escape the security guards. **Solidari@s con Itoiz continues their tour in Europe. Next stop? Who knows!** Wait to be surprised.

**Itoiz ez ito!** Don't drown ITOIZ!  
Against the privatisation of water.

**For more information:**

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# PILIPINOS FIGHT TO FREE THE LAND ... FROM GOLF



**In Nasugba**, Batangas, about 80 kilometers southwest of Manila, the Fil-Estate development company is trying to convert farmland into a tourist park called Harbortown. With four eighteen-hole golf courses, a marina, and luxury accommodations sprawling over 8000 hectares, Harbortown would be one of the largest golf resorts in Asia. In an advertisement on the company website, Fil-Estate tries to cast its plans as a benign haven for the serious vacationer: "Fil-Estate's Harbortown Nasugbu is not just a beach resort, it's a way of life."

**But Fil-Estate's** proposed "way of life" has brought death to seven Nasugbu farmers. These seven farmers were all active opponents of Harbortown, and relatives believe they were killed to intimidate others resisting the development.

**The most recent** murders occurred in early March. While returning home from a local fiesta, two farmers named Terry Sevilla and Roger Alla were ambushed and gunned down by still-unidentified assailants. Sevilla and Alla were each shot more than twenty times, each bullet a brutal re-

tort to the farmers' demands for preservation of their land and life.

**"Local officials**, who double as real estate agents, see Harbortown as progress and farmers as pests holding back the blessings of golf tourism," wrote journalist Howie Severino in a 1996 article in the now-defunct Manila Times. It is these sorts of perceptions of farmers as "pests" impeding "progress" — perceptions that stem from officials' ignorance and corruption — that breed the violent oppression of Pilipino people.

**This oppression** is widespread in the Philippines. Another major area of conflict is the Cordillera region of Northern Luzon, where indigenous people are in constant danger of be-

ing stripped of their land and traditions. To resist the incursion of mining, agriculture, and tourist-oriented industries into their ancestral lands, nearly 150 tribes in the region have united as the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA). Every year the members of the CPA gather with delegates from all over the world for a Cordillera Day celebration. On this day the diverse tribes of the region give updates on their situations, renew peace pacts, and affirm their common struggle for cultural preservation and self-determination.

...

**The indigenous** people's struggle in the Cordilleras and the peasant resistance in Hacienda Looc are two components of the Pilipino fight for national democracy. An overlapping collection of Pilipino organizations in the Bay Area is working to support these struggles in the context of the larger goal of true independence and sovereignty for the Philippines. We operate with a distinct focus on the Philippines, driven by the consciousness that the Philippines remains a neo-colony of the United States. We recognize that as Pilipino-Americans, we are here in the United States because of the effects of US imperialism, and that even though we've been separated from our homeland we remain bound to our people by blood, history, and common struggle. We support the strong movements for liberation that already occur in the Philippines through organizations belonging to the national alliance called BAYAN (Bagong Alyansang Makabayan). We work in solidarity with this movement in the Philippines and do not presume to think that we act in its place.

**We show** our support for the people's struggle through concrete actions. This month the Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines (CHiRP) sent the first-ever Bay Area delegation to Cordillera Day 2000 to support the CPA and to help build international solidarity with the Cordillera peoples' struggle. In conjunction with the delegation's trip, other members of CHiRP and the League of Filipino Students (LFS) organized a local event called "Tao ng Lupa (People of Land)" to raise awareness of the Cordie struggle among the Pilipino community in the Bay Area. To highlight the farmers' struggle in Hacienda Looc, CHiRP and LFS co-sponsored screenings of the *The Golf War* documentary, a film that focuses on peasant resistance to the Harbortown development (for more information go to [www.golfwar.org](http://www.golfwar.org)).

**CHiRP and LFS** recognize that struggles in the Philippines are directly connected to people's struggles here in the United States. We all live under the same system of global capitalism, which puts profits above people and consumerism above community. Under this system, defense of land in the Philippines should be one with defense of affordable housing in urban areas across the United States. Struggles to maintain subsistence agriculture and to resist tourist-oriented development in the Philippines should be one with struggles to obtain living wages and to preserve urban neighborhoods from the invasion of chain restaurants, ritzy stores and expensive live/work lofts.

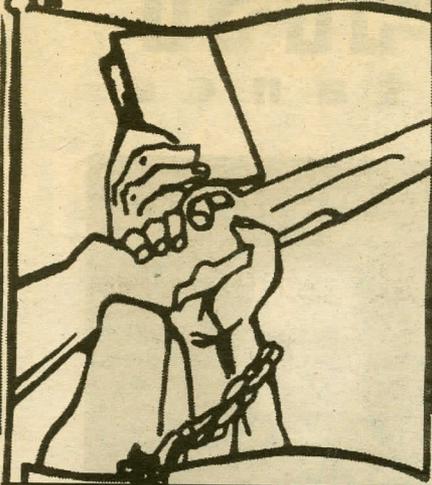
**Commercialization**, gentrification, and labor exploitation — these are all forces of a system that feeds the rich at the expense of the poor — a self-destructive system that eats away communities across the globe and that can only be stopped by a mass-movement of grassroots resistance.

...

**The Fil-Estate** website has a picture of Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman, and three other white men grinning over a map of Harbortown Nasugbu. The raw green countryside rises behind them. They might as well be Columbus looking at a map of the New World or Cortes looking at a map of Mexico, or for that matter a mega-mall developer looking at a plan of the South of Market district in San Francisco. If this isn't imperialism, then what is it? Development? Revitalization? Progress? Come on, we've heard all that before. Those of us who see and feel the harmful impacts of free-market development have got to stop globalization before it magnifies the mistakes of the past. Breaking down the system starts with us making connections between people's struggles, and rejecting the divide and conquer tactics that imperialists have used for centuries and that capitalists continue to use today.

For more information or to join the Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines send email to [chrp100@hotmail.com](mailto:chrp100@hotmail.com).

**MAKIBAKA  
HUWAG MATAKOT!**



**struggle. don't be afraid.**

**Filipinos first entered** the American consciousness at the turn of the century, when the Spanish-American War resulted in their (and Puerto Rico's) colonial subjugation.

**After the defeat** of the first Philippine Republic in the Filipino-American War of 1898-1902, this southeast Asian archipelago became a source of raw materials and a reservoir of human capital. Feudal oppression and colonial brutality drove rural Filipinos from their homes, while the lure of adventure and easy wealth to be had in the United States blurred the hardships formerly endured by Mexican farmhands (now restricted from entry into the U.S. by the Immigration Act of 1924).

**Over one hundred** thousand Pinoy / Pinays and Manongs (affectionate terms of address) provided the major labor force in agribusiness in Hawaii and the West Coast, and helped build the infrastructure of U.S. industrial capitalism. From 1907 to 1933, seven out of ten Hawaii plantation workers were Filipino "nationals" – neither citizens nor aliens. Severely exploited and confined to squalid barracks, Filipinos joined with Japanese, Chinese, and Korean, and other nationalists in a series of militant strikes in 1920 and 1924.

**In the United States** the Depression aggravated racism toward Filipinos, already victimized by previous anti-"oriental" legislation. Until 1942, longtime U.S. residents were denied the right to own land, marry whites, or apply for welfare. Citizenship was still reserved for "white persons," as stipulated by a 1934 court

## RICAN FIGURING the History of Filipinos in the United States

E. San Juan Jr.

ruling, which upheld the 1790 naturalization law. Racist violence culminated in the 1930 riots at Exeter, Watsonville, and Stockton, California – attacks motivated by the belief that Filipinos lowered the standard of living while also enjoying "the society of white girls."

**Immigration** was virtually halted by the Philippine Independence Act of 1934, but the sacrifices of Filipino soldiers, fighting alongside their American comrades at Bataan and Corregidor, had a positive effect on public opinion. In 1942, Filipinos became eligible for naturalization. Thousands volunteered for military service. Due to unequal power relations between the two countries, however, about 70,000 veterans of World War II are still awaiting full benefits. The liberation of the Philippines from Japanese occupation restored the unjust social structure on top of the incalculable physical and spiritual damage wrought by the war.

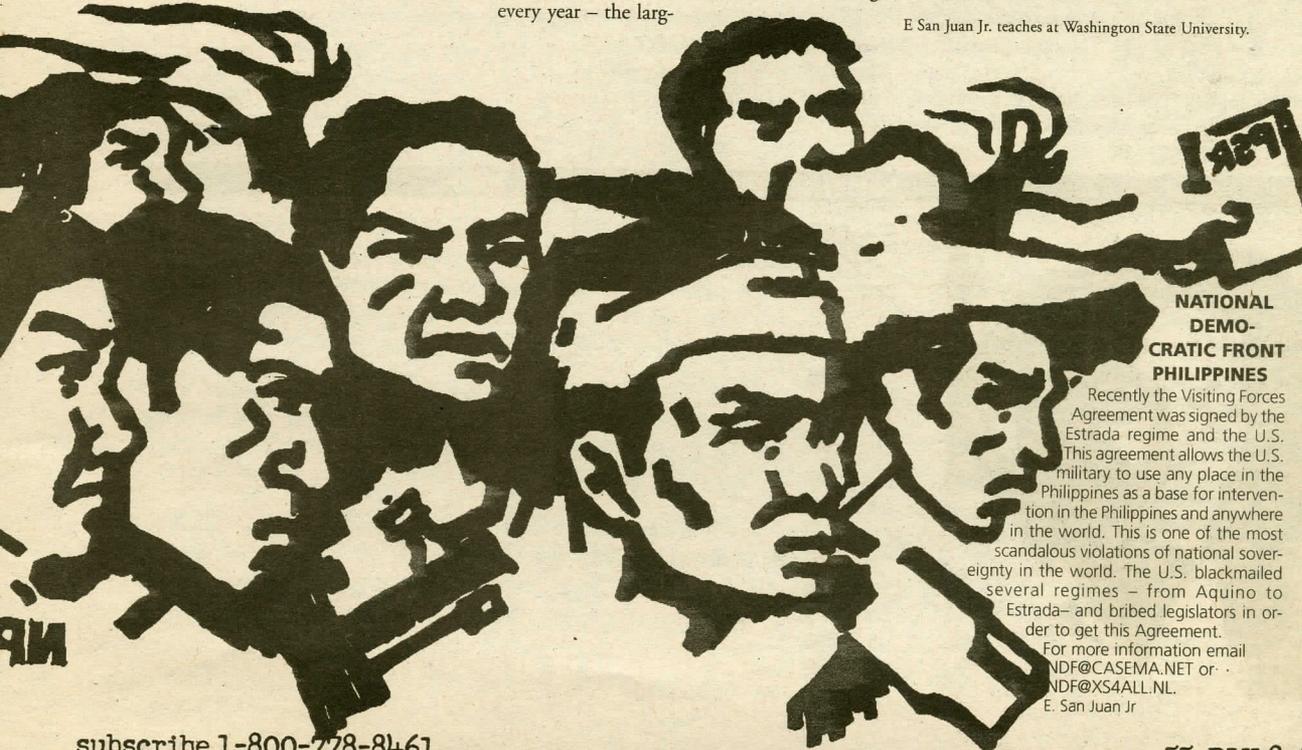
**From 1946 to 1965**, 35,700 Filipinos entered the U.S. as immigrants. The post-1965 contingent of Filipinos decisively altered the character of the Filipino community: 85 percent were high school graduates, most were professionals and highly skilled personnel who fitted the demands of the U.S. economy. But because of race-biased licensing and hiring practices, they found themselves underemployed or marginalized. Family reunification fostered by new legislation contributed to the leap from a total of 343,000 in 1970 to more than a million in the early 90s. Today, Filipinos number nearly three million, with over 70,000 coming every year – the larg-

est of the Asian Pacific Islander category.

**The Filipino** community at present occupies a peculiar position in the socioeconomic landscape. Although highly educated, Filipinos in general earn less than whites and all other Asian groups, except the Vietnamese. With women workers in the majority, Filipinos are invisible or absent in the prestigious managerial positions. Erroneously considered part of the mythical "model minority," they are denied benefits under Affirmative Action and "equal opportunity" state laws.

**It is, however**, impossible to divorce Filipinos from the problems of the larger class-divided society and from the effects of the global power conflicts configuring U.S.-Philippine relations. What needs more critical inquiry is not the supposed easy adaptation or integration of Filipinos in U.S. society, but the perceived consensus that Filipinos remain unassimilable if not recalcitrant elements. That is, they are not quite "oriental" nor Hispanic; at best they appear as hybrid diasporic subjects with suspect loyalties. Filipinos, however, cannot be called the fashionable "transnationals" because of racialized, ascribed markers (physical appearance, accent, peculiar non-white folkways) that are needed to sustain and reproduce Eurocentric white supremacy. Ultimately, Filipino agency in the era of global capitalism depends less on the whims of social transformation in the United States than on the fate of the struggle for autonomy and popular-democratic sovereignty in the homeland.

E San Juan Jr. teaches at Washington State University.



### NATIONAL DEMO- CRATIC FRONT PHILIPPINES

Recently the Visiting Forces Agreement was signed by the Estrada regime and the U.S. This agreement allows the U.S. military to use any place in the Philippines as a base for intervention in the Philippines and anywhere in the world. This is one of the most scandalous violations of national sovereignty in the world. The U.S. blackmailed several regimes – from Aquino to Estrada – and bribed legislators in order to get this Agreement.

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55 BLU 8



# RASTAFARI

culture of resistance

**Ras T Asheber**

is a Rasta Orator, Artist, and Musician residing in the Woodstock area.

**From the earliest days**, many Rastafari brethren wore beards, grew their locks and abided by strict laws as a covenant to H.I.M. as prescribed in Numbers 6; Leviticus 21 and Deuteronomy 14; and also inspired by photographs of Somali, Massai, Gaila and other tribes in and near Ethiopia. According to police reports the 'dreadlocks' appeared publicly and in abundance in the early 1940s.

**Meanwhile other** developments had taken place. Haile Selassie empowered Dr. Malaku E. Bayen to establish the Ethiopian World Federation, Inc. This organization came into being August 25, 1937 in New York City, the purpose set out as follows: We the Black peoples of the world, in order to effect unity, solidarity, liberty, freedom and self-determination; to secure justice and maintain the integrity of Ethiopia – which is our divine heritage – do hereby establish and ordain this constitution for the Ethiopian World Federation, Inc. The organization was established in Jamaica by Paul Erlington in August 1938 with one Mr. Mantle as its president and Erlington as vice-president.

**Meanwhile the** doctrine continued to spread and a number of less formal groups led by brethren such as Claudius Stewart, Joseph Myers, Raphael Downer and Brother Eddie emerged.

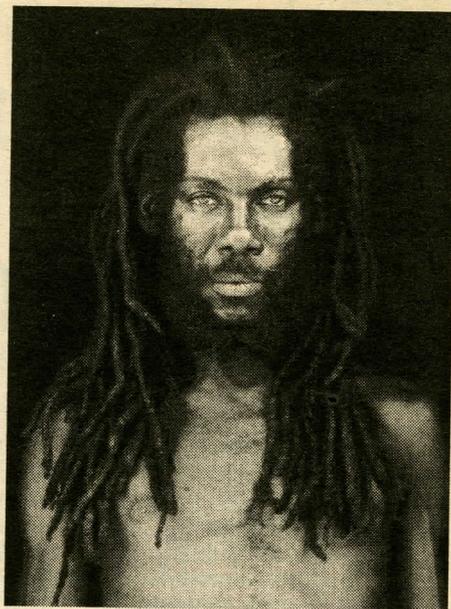
**After the invasion** of Pinnacle settlement the brethren scattered mostly to Kingston, others to Vere and other parts of the country. The number of locksmen increased and since the Rastafari brethren were known to use and esteem ganja in their sacrament, they were an obvious target for police raids. Bad blood increased between the brethren and the police, with the brethren systematically detained, beaten and shaved.

**In 1955** Mrs. Maymie Richardson came to Jamaica on behalf of the E.W.F. Inc. to expound its doctrine and organize locals, with which most of the early Rasta organs aligned themselves.

**In March 1958** Prince C. Edwards held a convention of Rastafari brethren at Kingston Pen (adjoining Back-O-Wall). Handbills had been circulated in advance and brethren from as far away as Montego Bay attended. The governor of Jamaica visited the premises before the opening. Nightly feasting, dancing and chanting to the akete drums were held around fires. The Nyabinghi theme was publicized throughout the gathering which lasted 21 days. This was the first public sharing of Rasta culture.

**By 1960** a University of the West Indies study numbered Rastafari at 15,000 with an equal number of "closely integrated sympathizers." Not taken into account, were the number of "combsomes" or brethren without locks, and the newly realized Rasta dawters and damsels.

**The late 60s** saw a surge in intellectual scrutiny of Rasta. One such intellect, Walter Rodney – a U.W.I. lecturer from Guyana – rejected the concerns of the academic elite and embraced the struggle of the poor. He spent much of his spare time with the idren in the inner city and gullies, learning the "livity" while he taught and enlarged their overstanding of Ethiopia and African history and the "runnings" at home and abroad, especially the black liberation struggle underway in the U.S. (most of which the local news media had suppressed). Rodney's work with Rastafari was the continuance of Garvey's, befitting the times and situation, yet more analytical. His teachings put things into perspective, help set Rastafari in its social context and strengthened the movement.



**This posed** a threat to the politicians of both parties who had helped perpetuate the biblical interpretation of social conflict. Rodney was barred from returning to Jamaica after having attended the historic Black Writers Conference in Montreal, Canada in October 1968. There was a mass protest but the authority responded by brutally beating demonstrators. This woke up the black intellectuals and the working class... and the curious.

**We had entered** the electronic age of mass media in the 70s. The proselytizers and orators of Rastafari were being replaced by the singers and players of instruments – the new psalmists. The dawters and damsels, who were under raps – in the background presiding over domestic affairs and educating the youth and themselves – since the days of Pinnacle and Back-O-Wall, were ready to assert themselves and 'man' the frontlines.

**Next Issue:**

Reggae rocks the world; the beliefs of the idren

## Letter to BLU Magazine April 7, 2000

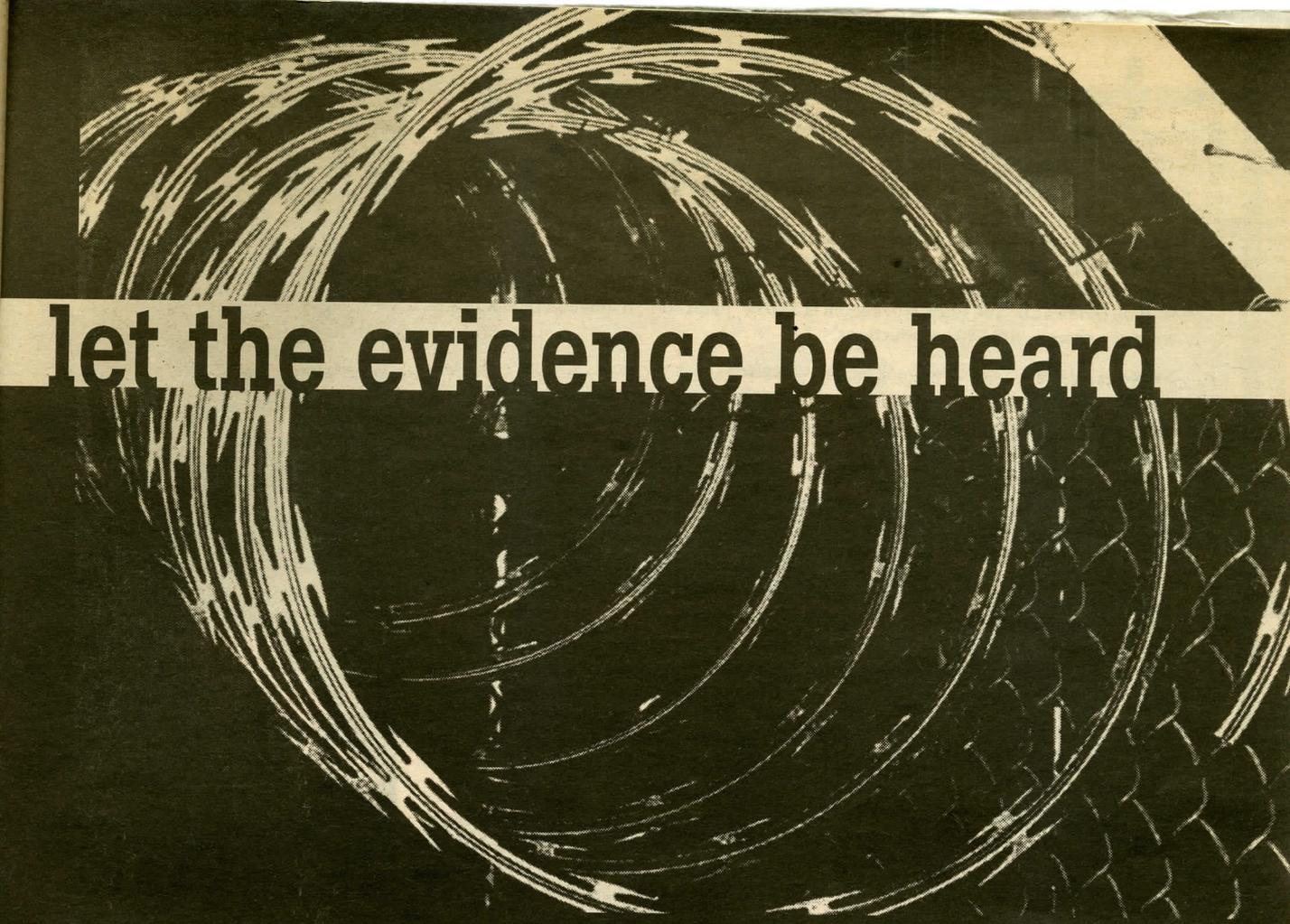


I am a Rastafarian. I have spent approximately seven years in the hole for refusing to cut my locks, which I have been wearing for over twenty years. In 1993, while in the hole, I was sent a copy of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 by Mumia Abu Jamal, who also featured my persecution in his paper. I then sued the Department of Corrections with a resultant settlement stipulating release to the prison population.

My purpose in writing to you is that though the Pennsylvania department of corrections officially recognizes Rastafari as a bonafide religion, we still have not been afforded a time and place for prayer services as other religious factions are, and at certain prisons, despite this recognition, Rastafarians are forcibly restrained and given a haircut.

I am seeking support to address these issues and would like to know if an ad in your publication is possible toward that end/beginning.

Blessings,  
Robert Smith AKA Kush-I  
AS 2769  
1100 Pike Street  
Huntingdon PA 16654-1112



# Let the evidence be heard

by Fred Mow

**Dear Sisters and Brothers and Supporters:** In 1981, when I was a 17-year-old juvenile, I became the victim of poor legal representation and a racially biased prosecution system, that is more often criminal than just. I was wrongly convicted of capital murder and sentenced to death by a nearly all white jury in spite of overwhelming and compelling evidence of my innocence. My trial was a travesty of justice, and a strong peoples' movement is the only hope to prevent my legal lynching and to stop my execution.

This is from a letter in which **Shaka Sankofa** (formerly known as Gary Graham) pleads for support in a desperate attempt to save his own life. Shaka, who has been on Texas' death row for nearly twenty years, is innocent and time is running out.

The murder took place in Houston in May, 1981. Days later, Shaka was arrested on other charges not relating to the murder. After a very suggestive identification process, he was picked out of a line-up and convicted of capital murder. Shaka's trial lawyers assumed his guilt and conducted no investigation of the evidence pertaining to his innocence.

In 1993 Shaka was represented by new counsel who investigated the facts for the first time. Here are some of their findings: Four people, all of whom took and passed polygraph tests, said Shaka was with them at the time of the murder, miles away from where it all went down in a Safeway store parking lot. Shaka was arrested with a .22 caliber pistol a week after the murder. The victim of the murder, Bobby Lambert, was killed with a .22 caliber pistol. However, the police firearms examiner determined that Shaka Sankofa's gun could not have fired the fatal bullet.

Shaka was convicted solely on the testimony of one eyewitness, Ms Bernadine Skillern. There were seven other crime scene witnesses, none of which identified Shaka Sankofa as the assailant. Out of the eight, Ms. Skillern, had one of the poorest views of the killer's face for only two or three seconds, at night, from a distance of thirty to forty feet. She later helped the police draw a composite of the assailant which other witnesses agreed looked similar to the assailant. Interestingly enough, this composite looks nothing like Shaka, who Ms. Skillern picked out of a live line-up soon after. Before viewing the live line-up, Ms. Skillern had looked

at photographs of potential suspects. She candidly admitted to the police that she was familiar with Shaka from looking at the photos. Indeed, Shaka was the only man in the live line-up that was in the photo selections as well. Another witness viewed the same line-up and did not see the man he remembered as the murderer.

Other witnesses described the assailant as being shorter than the victim of the murder. Shaka is three inches taller than Bobby Lambert was. One witness who stood beside the killer in the Safeway checkout line emphatically denied that Shaka Sankofa was the man. No fingerprints, ballistic or informant information links Shaka to the crime. None of the evidence of his innocence has ever been presented in front of a jury, thanks to the denial of both Texas courts and Federal courts up to the US Supreme Court, to reexamine or retry his case.

Shaka is still hopeful that his life can be saved, but he has been given a death date of June 22. There is hardly any time left until this case is solely in the blood-stained hands of Texas Governor George W Bush. Shaka needs both financial and moral support! For more information or to cop the Save Shaka benefit CD, go to [www.ncadp.org](http://www.ncadp.org). Contact [tmclary@ncadp.org](mailto:tmclary@ncadp.org) to find out how you

# Nzinga Reguiniah

A native of Jersey City, Nzinga has done extensive community and activist work. Before "spoken word" became a commonly used phrase, Nzinga was blazin' her poetry, traveling to universities, conferences, rallies, and shows across the US. Nzinga appeared on Weldon Irvine's CD "The Price of Freedom is *TRUTH*" dedicated to Amadou Diallo. This is what she shared with SWG productions.

**SWG:** What distinguishes the frankness of your work?

**Nzinga:** In all that I do, I've got to feel it. Even outside of creating spoken words, to helping somebody on the street, there's a sincerity I place inside of my tasks. From that harmony, the universe opens doors up to you, and returns it back in kind. We live in a society that does a lot of insane and unspiritual things to human beings. Sometimes the word "struggle" is used among revolutionaries but I choose "victory" because it is a word that helps me keep the goal in better focus.

**SWG:** How did your Motha Goddess poem come about, what inspired that?

**Nzinga:** I would honestly say that I used my imagination to put myself in the mind of The Most High, Creator/God/Goddess, for the frustration that must be there, and maybe anger at humans, and it brought out all of that.

**SWG:** You were once a member of a poetry group, tell us about that.

**Nzinga:** For three years in the early 90s, *Poetik Just-Us* ran strong in Jersey, all five of us. Our manager gave out assignments that we had to develop. That made it more challenging and enabled us to work in unison, doing themes and compilations. Being around MCs and rappers also affected me. MC's skills got to be tight and rappers always come hard with their flow, so I made sure my flow was understood, too. That flow being poetry.

For the youth reading this interview, I'd like to leave a particular message that Malcolm X taught, which is to always think for yourself. Don't allow anyone to "lead" your thinking, which then can allow them to lead your actions. You'll be doing what someone else wants, thinking it's what you want.

To obtain copies of Nzinga's latest book, *Poetikally Incorekt*, contact SWG Productions, Avonne Abanathya (212) 769.8405 or write to: 2828 Kennedy Blvd., PO Box 417, Jersey City, NJ 07306



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**When the Black Power Movement rose up to challenge racist practices and policies, the Black Arts Movement developed alongside it to dismantle assumptions about what qualifies as art and the function of art in society. Askia M. Toure, poet, essayist, editor and political editor, is an architect and leading voice of the Black Arts Movement. He is a former editor of the Journal of Black Poetry, Black Dialogue and Black Star, and staff writer for Liberator Magazine, organs of the Black Power Revolt. His works are widely anthologized and he is the author of *Juju* and *Songhai*, two volumes of verse. Here he discusses with Jamarhl Crawford, aka Uno the Prophet, how these struggles are communicated to the next generation.**

**Jamarhl Crawford:** I think that when the black community was coming up out of slavery, and also in the Civil Rights era, there was a communal attitude, but now I see an environment where the respect and traditions of our community aren't passed on from generation to generation. Do you see that?

**Askia Toure:** I am concerned about the reluctance of my generation to pass on its accumulated knowledge and wisdom to younger generations. One of the things that bothers me is the very dangerous, deadly, toxic yet sophisticated society that has been subtly and systematically attempting to assimilate the African-American community. Not so much racially, but in terms of culture and values. If my generation does not get involved, it will be the white corporate system that will socialize the younger generation of black people. That is dangerous, it is deadly, because then we have a historical discontinuity and we have to reinvent the

wheel all over.

When I was in New York in the 60s, we were in touch with the Civil Rights Movement and of course through the same period in Harlem we came in contact with our brother Malcolm and the Nation of Islam. We were fortunate to interact with the leading forces of the Black Freedom Movement as well as to develop as writers and artists and musicians and so forth, in our own right. For instance, we were guided by the great griot and legendary poet Langston Hughes. Langston used to send us tickets for his plays or he would let us into the dress rehearsal. All these elders guided us and looked over us and kept an eye on us, and that shaped how we viewed the behavior of dedicated black activists and radicals and freedom fighters. And particularly the way the old school behaved toward us set a model for us as to how we should interact with the youth. In that sense coming on up to the hip

hop movement, I've heard from a number of young poets and community culture activists that they're surprised that they have access to people like myself, Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez and others. But that's the way Langston Hughes and Queen Mother Moore and them were towards us. In the griot tradition we come out of, we see the artist and the poet as the voice of his or her community, interacting with the progressing elements of the community, using art as part of the process of bearing witness. James Baldwin comes out of the same tradition; bearing witness for the people, embodying the national consciousness of the people. And that doesn't mean that we necessarily agree on things, but we had mutual respect. As a result of that, they were able to pass on the cultural traditions and the history and the politics of their generation to us as the younger generation.

It is important that we understand the origins of our youth movement – how it has affected American society and how it can become more effective in terms of transforming American society, because there's a battle that's going on now and it's happening to our music. The damn U.S. corporate culture is trying to co-opt the hip hop culture the same way that they co-opted Dizzy Gillespie and them. One of the things that the great jazz drummer Max Roach taught us was how

# askia toure

DEVELOP THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE REVOLUTION

## uno the prophet

Henry Louis Gates Jr has dismissed the Black Arts Movement as the "shortest and least successful" movement in African-American cultural history. No doubt if you're looking for the influence of the poets, artists, playwrights, and musicians of the 60s in mainstream music, literature or film, you'll find that the passion and authenticity of Sonia Sanchez, The Last Poets, Askia Toure, Amira Baraka, etc have been sidelined or coopted. But the mainstream isn't the place to look...yet. There are voices from the hip hop generation, direct heirs of the Black Arts Movement, who are dedicated to bringing and renewing the messages of earlier generations and packaging it for mass consumption.

Jamarhl Carlton Crawford, aka Uno the Prophet, was raised in the Black communities of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan. Actively involved in the struggle of his people as a writer and orator, Jamarhl offers his reflections on life and love from a Black perspective. Under the banner of his company, Prophesy: Communications, Jamarhl has compiled some of his work into *Prophesy: Reflections on Life & Love from a Black Perspective*, a self-published book of poetry, essays and short stories, and *Prophetic Visions*, a 20 song hip hop "audiomumentary" featuring exclusively politically & socially conscious lyrics. The revolutionary messages exist; they need to be broadcast.

I want to commercialize consciousness. People say, "That's a contradiction in terms." Well, what does commercialize mean? Commercialize means you prepare it for mass consumption. I'm all about that. The problem is now, when people think commercial, they think slackness. A rock is going to be a rock, wherever it is. But now if I could put a rock in everybody's home in America with the chicken in the pot, now we got a movement here.

The only difference between the underground and the over ground is in distribution. We need to be able to produce our things just how we mostly do, in our garages or whatever. So you have a BLU magazine or a Uno the Prophet CD or a book or whatever produced to industry quality standards. The only problem then becomes, how do we get this product to the millions of people out there who will want it once they see it.

People are ready for this because they're tired of this shit. But really we have no choices – nothing that you want is in that equation. So, I have a choice of sneakers. Well, I want some all black sneakers with a red stripe on one side and a green circle on the other. I can't get that. I have to get Nikes or Adidas or whatever they promote.

So I'm trying to move myself from a consumer to a provider. The difference between me as the provider and everyone else as a provider is that my goal is to provide because my people need, not because I want. I plan to get more into the manufacturing, the actual making. The first thing I would do, I would buy printing presses and these type of things. Then I wouldn't even charge people like Askia to make books.

Just as Babylon depends on its Babylon talent, and they have their go-to guy, we gotta have our go-to guys. As dead prez, who I'm loving right now, says with they logo, Together the ants will defeat the elephant.

the establishment was trying to move on the be-bop musicians, on Monk and all them, and how they tried to manipulate them. So the young people have to understand that every time we create an independent movement, the corporate culture moves in like a vampire to suck it dry and kill it. That's going on now within hip hop.

But I have to compliment hip hop activists and leaders in conscious hip hop because more and more they seem to be controlling aspects of hip hop culture and marketing, and controlling the production. That's very key, but I think equally key should be a move to develop independent black-controlled hip

hop journals. If you control your journals then you control the direction of your movement. That's not putting down any allies, but I think of what Frederick Douglass says: "He who would be free must strike the first blow." It's very important that the hip hop youth realize that if you're gonna be a part of a cultural revolution, you have to take the initiative to lead that revolution. You have to develop the institutions of that revolution: the magazines and the centers. You cannot allow other forces, even your allies, to define your cultural revolution, because however well-meaning they are, they didn't initiate the struggle.

**Jamarhl Crawford:** I've noticed that throughout time, most often the wise man was a scribe or a singer, so the arts always played some role in shaping policy and communicating it to the masses. Artists were the messengers, the bearers of the news. Now look at that in contrast to members of the black brainiacs, the public intellectuals,

whose position is not to be a participant in the revolution but to comment on it. I think our leadership is going to have to come from the poets and musicians.

**Askia Toure:** It's critical that the youth realize that you all are the leaders of the twenty-first century and that the oppressor society has you in its gun sights. What they want to do is to separate you from us, and to pump the corporate values into you and alienate you from the older generation. At the same time they want to pimp you to market their clothes and make you alien to your community and your traditions.

But on the positive side, I think we can say now that hip hop is here to stay, even though every two years the mass media comes out and says, "hip hop is a fad, it's on the way out." Well, it's been about twenty years now and hip hop hasn't gone anywhere. And I think it's because our spirit lives in the music, so I agree that the poets, the rappers, need to lead this revolution. The beautiful little princess from the Fugees, Lauryn, I like her move to embrace the Marley family and to keep the tradition going from Bob. We will have to struggle to make this positive hip hop the leading trend, but it is our duty as griots of the African-American community and the African world to embrace you as our youth and our future so that together we can triumph. One of the things that we always said in the Black Liberation Movement is, "We will win, you know we will win; we will win without a doubt."

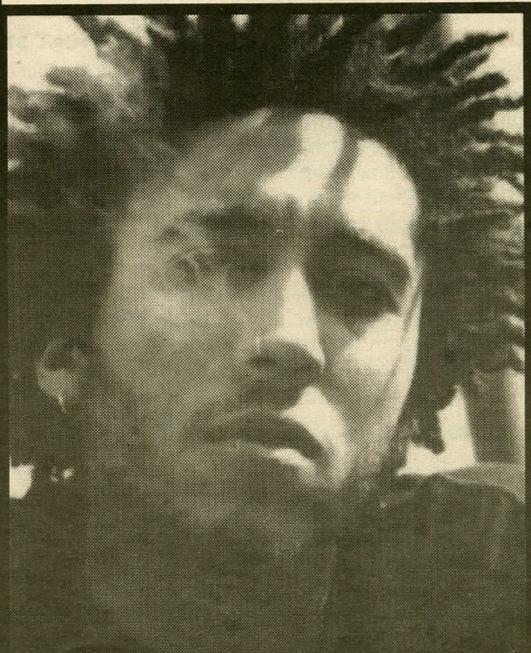


As a black people we gonna need to talk. Rasta gonna have to deal with Five Percenter, and Five Percenter gonna have to deal with Christian and Muslim and all this. As long as you ain't worshipping the devil, as long as you ain't screwing no little kids, as long as you ain't trying to shoot me, as long as you ain't basically doing nothing that's really crazy and anti-Black life, we have to accept you.

Because there is one thing that is happening right now in the black conscious communities that is very dangerous. People are moving to this metaphysical bullshit, stuff like, "We have to transcend this, we are not of this dimension, and we must transcend to the seventh level, and once we do this, we will understand that our molecules will begin to..." What did you just say? What does this have to do with day to day living? What does this have to do with my struggle, my movement as a black man in this society that is so against me? Could the death of

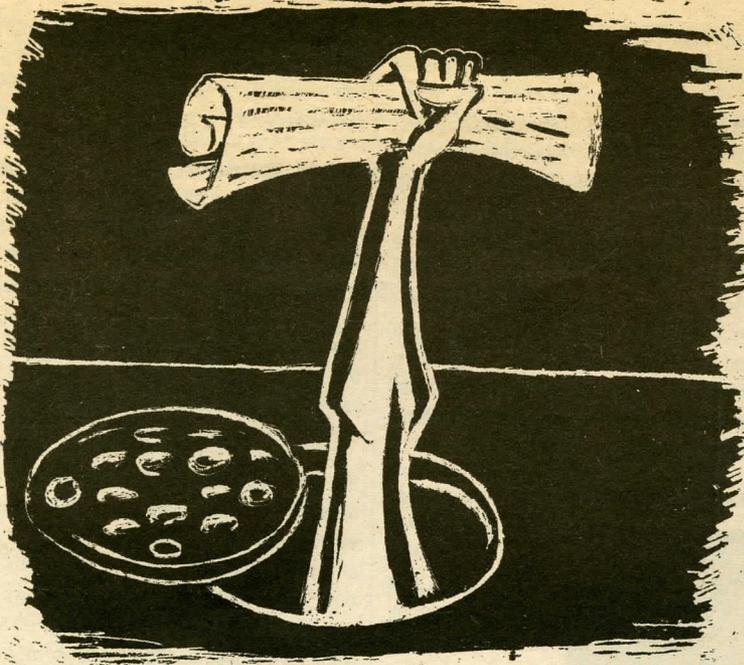
Amadou Diallo been prevented had he just levitated his molecules? I can't deal with that. It's not here. And if these people can't take me to the seventh dimension or bring me back a happy meal from there, I can't deal with it. These cats want to sit and talk about the science-age of Kemmit and all this degrees and all this stuff as if they were even mathematicians! I'll ask them to divide 36 into 340, will fuck 'em up for a good ten minutes.

We can tap into the existing technology. I don't know if you're aware of this FCC thing that's happening, where they figure that they'll issue small licenses to low wattage radio stations. Which means that you or I can broadcast radio. I personally think that I could produce a radio



show out of my house in my underwear that could rival Hot 97. You just have to let people know that it's out there, and I think people will make the choice. But we've gotta duplicate that all over - it can't just be Jamarhl, it gotta be a million of us all over the place, rocking the rock. If we all hit it at the same time, it might crack.

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**Big Time** The Magazine of Urban Art and Expression • This is the type of magazine that you keep picking up and you always find something new to look at. It's loaded with top quality reproduction of graffiti from all over – the super-glossy format is a form of resistance to a world that doesn't want to believe that inner-city kids can excel. There are a couple articles on underground music and street culture, but what Big Time is best at and does most of is reproducing graphic masterpieces. PO Box 11262 • Glendale CA 91226 • www.bigtimemagazine.com

**Seasons of Her** by Tonya Marie Evans • Creatively and attractively produced, this collection of poetry explores the proverbial seasons in the life of a woman. Seasons

of Her was independently published by Find Your Own Shine, a company created by Tonya Marie, who is a poet by day and spoken-word poet by night, and her mother. Seasons is already moving into a second printing, and is available from Amazon.com. Also check www.fyos.com.

**www.fightthepower.net** • Maintained and updated almost daily by the capital region Justice for Diallo Committee, this page has helpful and current information on how you can participate in work against police brutality, the Rockefeller Drug Laws, the occupation of Vieques, etc.

**The Next Step** a field report from death penalty abolitionists • BLU's first book, this 156 page limited edition soft-cover has perspectives from seventeen leading abolitionists – Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, from varied communities and backgrounds – on the practical and spiritual aspects of their shared commitment to ending the death penalty. Call 800.778.8461 to order.

**Legacy to Liberation** politics and culture of revolutionary asian pacific america • A new anthology was edited by Fred Ho, well known for his work on a range of issues, with illustrations by Todd Tarselli, a prisoner in SCI Greene. This collection of writings and interviews with major Asian American radical activists from the last thirty years includes contributions from Yuri Kochiyama, Steve Yip, and many others. For more information call 718.832.1825 or visit www.bigredmedia.com

**Setente veces Siete** • Christoph Arnold's best-selling book on forgiveness has just been released in a Spanish translation by political prisoner Juan Seggara Palmer and with an introduction by Piri Thomas.

Senta veces es un acolección de historias autenticas de hombres y mujeres como tú y yo, gente afectada por el racismo, la infidelidad matrimonial, la represión política, la brutalidad policial, el sufrimiento de la gurra, la muerte violenta de un ser querido. No se trata de una discusión abstracta o teórica. Al leer estos relatos, entramos en la vida de personas que han sufrido y han perdonar (y de los que no han perdonado), de personas que descubrieron que el perdón tiene el poder de sanar aún las más profundas heridas (y de las continúan en búsqueda de reconciliación). 800.521.8211

## zine review

**Thoughts Manifested** During the summer of 98 things got especially hectic for me. I was homeless and just trying to survive, trying to obtain food, clothes and shelter took up all of my time. There was no time for manifesting dreams. My brother (who was going through these times with me) and I kept promising ourselves that as soon as we got situated we would start making moves to use our gifts, drawing and writing, to bring about change in us as well as in the world. We were tired of seeing our thoughts scribbled on walls and on loose leaf paper. It was time to expand.

One morning I was listening to dead prez crossing the Manhattan Bridge on the Q train, As I was gazing at the most famous skyline in the world M1 spit these words through my head phones into my ears, "Everything you see is just a thought manifested." I remember I pressed the stop button on my walkman and just sat there, brain cells multiplying like cases of corruption in the NYPD. That verse made me realize that I could achieve anything. Even those seemingly super-human structures that I was gazing at were in fact just ideas brought to life. So, with that in mind, I decided to do for self and start my own publication. Hence, Thoughts Manifested was born.

As I went about putting Issue Won together, several run ins with the law made me even hungrier for change. Not that bumping heads with the beast was anything new to me. It was just that now instead of complaining to myself about this fucked up system, I could write about it and reach the masses, possibly inspiring people to make changes. It wasn't a whole lot, but it was a start.

Writing has become a big part of my life. Judging from the positive feedback people have given me, its the medium I will probably use most to educate my people, But it's not enough. I know that my only contribution to The Cause can't be to just write about it. I know I have to get my hands dirty and I don't mean with ink. I mean with the dirt you get under your fingernails and all over yourself from being on the front lines. J.pAbLo • Thoughts Manifested • PO Box 122 • NY NY 10044



# Barrio Bodega

essential books, music, and films of the Puerto Rican experience

## books

**Prisoners of Colonialism** by Ronald Fernandez – Possibly the clearest and best book on the subject of Puerto Rican liberation and the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

**El Bodega Sold Dreams** by Miguel Pinero – Puerto poetry by the “junky Jesus” of the Nuyoricans

**Down These Mean Streets** by Piri Thomas – The classic Boricua story of saints, sinners, and slum survival.

**Dona Lichas Island** by Alfredo Lopez – The story of Rican resistance as seen through the eyes of 60 year old Dona Licha.

**Basquiat** by Phoebe Hoban – The story of how a Puerto Rican/Haitian graffiti artist from Brooklyn became the bad boy of the bourgeoisie art world and then OD'ed at the age of 27.

**When I was Puerto Rican** by Esmeralda Santiago – A beautiful tribute to the island of our childhood.

**Puerto Rican Obituary** by Pedro Pietri – A Puerto poem that reads like the story of our life...and death.

## music

**Free by La Protesta** – In the early 70s La Protesta was one of the more political bandas on the scene. And they cooked with the best of 'em too.

**Siembra** by Willie Colon/Ruben Blades – The conscious classic by these two great salsa stars and politico prospects.

**Vamonos pa' el monte** by Eddie Palmieri – The title cut alone is worth the cost of this cultural classic.

**Indestructible** by Ray Barreto – He's no superman, but, as this classic early 70s release confirms, this percussion powerhouse truly is indestructible

**La Voz** by Hector Lavoe – The first solo release by the official slum saint of street salsa.

**Somos Boricuas** by Los Pleneros De la 21 – NYC bomba in the belly of the beast.

**Yo Protesto** by Roy Brown – Puerto Rican poetry and protest.

**Creo En La Libertad** by Andres Jimenez – El Jibarito is truly Puerto Rico's yearning voice of liberation. His is a song as yet unsung.

**Liberation Day** by Ricanstruction – The soundtrack for Rican revolution.

## fiction films

**Our Latin Thing** – The story of salsa, this film has amazing live performance footage featuring many of the salsa legends of the 70s.

**Ricanstrucing Vieques** – The Ricanstruction revolutionaries strike again with an experimental documentary that brings the Vieques struggle past the politics and straight to the Puerto Punx.

**Amor + Rabia** – A short film about love, life, and liberation as seen through the eyes of 3 young Anarcho-Puerto Punx.

**Short Eyes** – Written while on lock down by one of the founders of the Nuyorican poets, Miguel Pinero, this is a gritty tale of prison, profanity, and the Puerto poetry of survival.

**Puerto Rican Mambo** – Not a Musical – a comedy about the absurdity of the life of those legal aliens known as Puerto Ricans

**The double life of Ernesto Gomez-Gomez** – The story of the young son of former Puerto Rican POW, who was sent to Mexico and given a new identity to shield him from his mother's life as an independentista.

**Crossover Dreams** – Ruben Blades starred in this story about a struggling Puerto Rican salsero who crosses over to la vida loca, only to discover the asphalt is grayer on the other side.

**Wildstyle** – For those who don't remember the old school, the Hip Hop nation used to be about more than just rapping. Yeah, once upon a time there was the outlaw art known as graffiti and the calle choreography known as breaking.

**The Nationalists** – This film focuses on the members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. Excellent, with rarely seen footage of Lolita And Rafa.

**Romero** – This life story of liberation theologian, Archbishop Romero of El Salvador, stars the premiere Puerto Rican actor, Raul Julia.

–Not4Prophet is the lead singer for Ricanstruction

## Black and Gold video 74 min Big Noise Films 1999

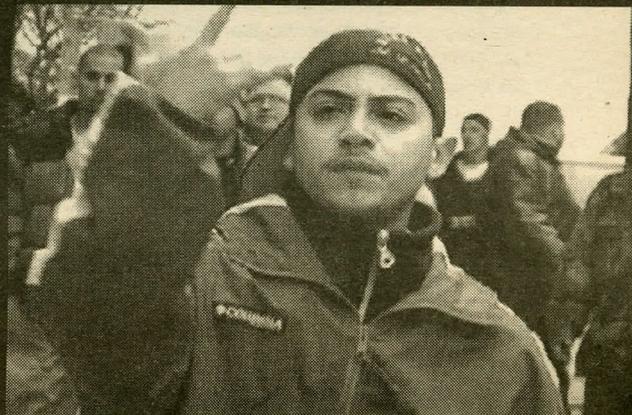
**This** is the Latin Kings like you never seen them before. King Tone covers the history of the movement including, its violent and criminal past, but the mobster image portrayed in the media is not as accurate as you might think. In 1994 the group reorganized as the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation to ditch their criminal past and turn to the revolutionary and community-oriented activities of the Young Lords and Black Panthers. The new Nation is using street credibility to give their people pride and direction. Now the townships are preaching self respect and solidarity among oppressed people, and judging by the video clips, they are doing a fine job.

**Even so**, the Latin King and Queen Nation has a long battle ahead of them to prove to the world who they are, but I believe they can make it. Even in the face of vicious police repression and brutality the Kings are moving on. Cause like King Tone says, “When the cops come for you and arrest you because you're a King – that's power.”

**The cops** and feds say that it's the same old gangsta shit with a public relations campaign but I don't believe them. The reason is this: someone pulling a PR campaign doesn't openly admit to their own dirt. Notice how the NYPD keeps quiet?

**This** is a quality production with some ill effects in the camera work and a short punchy script. And you gotta love the chump shots of the DA. Honestly, this is the first documentary that has impressed me.

by Rick Rowley and Jacqueline Soohen, associate producer Hector Torres, original beats by Sasha Costaza-Chock Moosaka.  
po box 842 • cambridge ma 02238 • vox: 617.493.6635 •  
www.bignoisefilms.com



pete weeks

# SELECTA

## C-Rayz Walz & Plain Pat *The Prelude*

C-Rayz is one of those underground MCs with more talent in his little finger than most signed artists. He's mad conscious and fun. Yeah I said it, an underground conscious artist who don't take himself so serious that he forgets about fun. *The Prelude* boasts some great tracks like "Fuck the Mayor" and "Nann God" and when I asked around I was told he has even better stuff. C-Rayz kicks it about Amadou, pigs, and building strong inner power cause the next level don't tolerate cowards. And C-Rayz is obviously taking it to the next level. Along with all this he gets the Mockingbird of Hip Hop Award. "Great Voices" is a comic mimicry of artists like Black Star, DMX, ODB, and Eminem. The man's got a Strong Hold on the mic with a killer delivery plus he's nice like the ice cream guy. You can't get this album unless you know someone who has it (C-Rayz pressed limited quantities). But don't miss on his next joint, ok?

**Asian Dub Foundation's** latest album *Community Music* was released in March. Politically conscious lyrics and excellent rhythms. Here's a group that wants to arouse a sense of spiritual and practical responsibility in the human soul, which so many groups have tried to avoid by not understanding that the means are more important than the ends. And when they say "When we reach da glass ceiling, we will blow it sky high" you can already hear the uneasy shuffling of loafers throughout white middle society.

At a time when the world seems destined towards globalization, the **B-Side Players**—a ten member San Diego-based band that mixes latin, jazz, funk and soul—is shouting out universal consciousness with their latest musical accomplishment, *Culture of Resistance*. The album covers many topics—the leading track "Free Mumia" gets followed up with tracks about the Zapatistas, globalization, and famine. They combine "old issues" with the "new issues," and show a level of consciousness broad enough to interest and bring together many. The band's debut CD, *Renacimiento*, (Sestwide Inc./High Vibe Records) was released with the message of coming together against the system. *Renacimiento* is the rebirth of minds and souls representing the struggle against the system that won't allow us the time and space to come together. Check out the B Side Players on line at [www.BSIDEPLAYERS.com](http://www.BSIDEPLAYERS.com). For more info or booking call 619.583.8813.

Although the main theme of **the eClecTic's** solo debut is focused on the title, *Hip-Hop*, the 22 track LP also touches on broader topics...like love and life. The production the eClecTic's ability as a jazz musician; many of the tracks are original compositions, while others are either heavily influenced by jazz standards or feature excerpts. The lyrical content is very strong throughout, but an occasional hook becomes too repetitive and annoying. Overall, *Hip-Hop the LP* is a great CD worth picking up. The eClecTic has a lot to say about the state of hip hop and the people it embodies and affects. If he develops into a lyricist, his blazing production could definitely make the eClecTic's next work a hip hop classic. For now he's a good MC and very a versatile musician making him a complete artist with a lot of potential.

**Mola's** recently released *Revelations* does exactly what the title promises. This female hip hop duo,

Moet (da diamond genesis) and La (Lajhee Jewel) are definitely changing the stereotypes of women in hip hop and the face of conscious music. Mola's music flows with positivity and the accomplishment that comes from experience and insight into the game.

Both Mo and La were busy trying to launch separate music careers before they were introduced to each other at Columbia Records. They bonded and began writing what is now *Revelations*. In 1996 they signed with Mo Town Records but after a year of slow progress they asked to be released and began pursuing an independent career. In 1999 after continued work together they signed with Braxton Records.

With the dropping of their debut album Mola promises a new outlook on female emcees and the level of consciousness in hip hop. Production is tight and flows with heavy bass, bouncing beats, and lyrical delivery that leaves a stain in your brain not to be forgotten. For booking or info call Braxton Records at 212.330.7698 or fax 212.977.3089.

With *Like Water For Chocolate*, **Common** demonstrates with his fourth LP why he is one of the most respected lyricists in the game. He has succeeded in creating a disc that's hot from the reverb-filled first track, "Time Travelin'" to the final track, another vocal visit from his father, "Pops Rap III...All My Children." Executive Producer ?UESTLOVE of The Roots, did his thing, cleverly sequencing each track to make the LP complete in every way. The beats are heavily influenced by jazz and soul, showing that rap is just one part of black music.

Lyricaly, there's no weak point on the album, making it hard to pick a favorite cut. "Dooinit" is a dis on the Jiggy and Ghettofab style celebrated by the radio and mainstream. Common lets you know "He fell off cuz I pushed him." "The Light" is an open love letter showing women in "a new light," a more respectable one. Those two tracks are much needed responses to the trend in hip hop of concerning yourself with money, ice, and hoes.

"A Song For Assata" might be some of the best storytelling ever laid on wax. Common tells the story of Assata Shakur, who received political asylum in Cuba after escaping from a New Jersey Prison. He then shares a real treat with us, Assata's voice explaining her thoughts on freedom or lack of it.

Overall, this is probably Common's best work yet, and definitely the best hip hop album of the millennium so far. Common's honesty and thought-provoking intellectual rhymes may be too deep for some people, but anyone that listens are sure to be affected by this masterpiece.

**Dark Theory** a hot hip hop/ reggae crew out of Brooklyn represents real life, the way real people live it. The birth of Dark Theory came about in '92 when producer/rapper Voodoo and a five strong crew released *Music for the Working Class*. Dark Theory has since appeared on cable videos, Pepsi commercials, college campuses, and the underground club circuit. Look out for Dark Theory and pick up their album, full of diversity, bingin' beats and lyrics like no other. tel: 212.714.7123 • email [darktheory@hotmail.com](mailto:darktheory@hotmail.com).

## Other albums to pick up are:

- Orko the Sykotik Alien's latest, *Walkman Terrorist EP*, available at [www.orkoalien.com](http://www.orkoalien.com)
- Kirk Nugent's *The Unpopular Truth*, a dope spoken word album recorded live at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.
- Troupe Record's hottest new release from recording artist gorin-no-sho titled *Inner Light* is available at [www.trouperrecords.com](http://www.trouperrecords.com).
- Medusa's new releases on the Feline Science label
- Black Fire is a Native American (Dine') traditionally influenced, high energy, politically driven group comprised of three siblings. Born into the heart of a political land dispute area called Big Mountain on the Navajo nation, this family's powerful music reflects the hopes, freedoms, and barriers of today's world. Tacoho Productions • PO Box 1492 • Flagstaff AZ 86002

# SELECTA

## ΕΛΕΦΑΝΤ TRACKS

by red zim

Usually a benefit compilation is lame-ass activism by big name artists. The causes are the safe ones – we're talking Free Tibet, Save American Family Farms, and Feed the Ethiopians. The CDs are a dumping ground for a couple b-side tracks by first-rate artists, padded out with second-rate tracks by second-rate artists.

The Elephant Track compilation, a hip hop project from San Francisco's Asian Improv label, is different. Asian Improv scores big with the 17 imprints on the Elephant Tracks disc. One nice thing about Elephant Tracks is the number DJs – more than most standard hip-hop collections. Mista Sinista of X-ecutioners fame, Kuttin Kandi of 5th Platoon, and DJ Rhettmatic of the World Famous Beat Junkies all show up and shred some vinyl. The rhyming on the album is equally strong: headliners include Philly's Mountain Brothers throwing down "Community", while Medusa donates "Mine to Give." A number of newer talents contribute, most notably

the Aggressive Mic Experts. AME are from the Bay Area underground and claim to be "bringing the flava like Chuck D."

But enough about the music – a benefit CD's gotta kick the money somewhere, right? All the money from Elephant Tracks project goes to the Asian-Pacific Islander Student Alliance's High School Motivational Conference at UC Santa Cruz. Christine Padilla, who produced the Elephant Tracks compilation, gave me the lowdown on APISA: "It's a student-run organization on the Santa Cruz campus. It serves as a cultural resource for the collective Asian/Pacific Islander (API) community. The purpose of its annual High School Motivational Conference is to encourage high school students to strive for higher learning and to help them realize that college is accessible. The conference includes workshops on identity, theater, and self-expression; and other activities, such as open mics and talent shows. There are hopes that exposure to a strong API community will provide a space where issues of personal and academic identity can be addressed."

In addition to raising money for the APISA conference, Elephant Tracks breaks down a number of misconceptions concerning Asian youth. Christine is quick to point out that, contrary to stereotype, there are a lot of underprivileged kids in the Asian community, and they aren't always the smartest kids in class, as the major networks would have you believe. She also stresses the diversity of API culture, mentioning kids of Southeast Asian, Asian Indian, Micronesian and Melanesian background, to name a few, and says that Elephant Tracks and APISA benefits all of them.

Elephant Tracks also puts a bullet in the head of the idea that Asian hip hop doesn't exist or doesn't have mass market appeal. The Asian artists on the disc, most notably AME and the Mountain Brothers, have a bright future ahead of them. Although Elephant Tracks doesn't hype its "Asian-ness," Christine says it was very important to have API artists represent on the disc. "Since it benefits the APISA High School Motivational Conference, we thought it would not only be amazing to show the API students that they have API role models who support them, but that they also have diverse support from the entire hip hop community." And although mainstream media is ignoring asian artists, Elephant Tracks may well change that. With the amount of talent the project put onto one CD, their conference should be well-funded. Heads should check the album and support them further, because true to its name, Elephant Tracks is sure cause some ground thumping and feet stomping when you punch play.  
www.asianimprov.com 415.243.8808



## Señor Santana is Sweet Guitar

album review:  
SUPERNATURAL

by Mumia Abu-Jamal



He stands, eyes closed, face a misty reflection of rapture, as his right hand picks out sounds from a thin, vibrating, metallic string and his left hand sets the tone, opening and stopping at the fret, producing a trill as hip as it is hypnotic. With the phenomenal success of his new album *Supernatural*, a whole new generation is being swept away by the sharp picking, strumming, and stroking of Carlos Santana. A single off of his roaring CD, "Maria, Maria," is a masterful interplay between his ethereal, almost spiritually gentle guitar-play, and a raw, earnest rap-song – a plaintive love song to an urban beauty, matched by Santana's evocative, finger-fed intonations. Here, one sees and hears the poignant April-November marriage of two remarkable forms, the percussive, city-gritty of street-rap, and the smooth, classic clarity of a master-player merging into a remarkable and memorable seamless whole. Here Santana's debt to the old master, Jimi Hendrix, seems clearest.

For Santana's influential resumé did not now begin. Older (or more mature) musical aficionados remember what have become classics of the world of rock like "Black Magic Woman" and the mystical, intense meditations on "Caravanserai." These works ruled the rock or jazz airwaves in the 1970s.

Santana's virtuosity can be seen in his split-second shift from acoustic to electric guitar in the opening stanzas of "Maria, Maria." How he mimics the human voice, with a tone that seems more akin to tenor saxophone than a stringed instrument, is a measure of his utterly remarkable mastership of the instrument.

Joining him on this single is the multi-talented Wyclef Jean of The Fugees and the Product C & G, who provide Santana with vocal accompaniment that are crucial to the work's success. For the youth, Santana is "new" and "cool". For the oldheads, it is the reemergence of a talent that lit his generation, decades ago. For both, this drum-inflected, Latin-Afro-urban music is simply damn good music that treats the ear and sweetens the soul.





# Ozomatli

cuts from a conversation

**Ozomatli is a most righteous collection of creative minds, bodies, souls, and spirits.** These brothers are every bit of energy on the stage, through the mics, unplugged, spreading energy without even having to say, "Yo, this is spiritual. Yo, this is conscious." They're just speaking truth, they're speaking honesty, they speak bluntly in regards to Chota, the cops, the pigs of this Babylon. Conceptions and ideologies are being spread through the mind and the pen on paper and then through the rhythm/ rhyming of rap and it gives us a sense of self, a sense of responsibility, a sense of aspirations. It's the Wake Up Call that some still need. Perhaps they are acting as the buzzer on the alarm clock which people keep trying to slap down when they know they gotta get up and dance on the grave of apathy. Coming at you. ~ YaYa

**Ya Ya:** What goes into the collective creation of Ozomatli's music?

**Raul:** It's part of the struggle of trying to bring people together or bring people into a bigger consciousness about the world, about humanity. So it's something that we have to try and live up to and work at every day. Those are the ideals we put within our music: some that are real explicit and some that is just in the joy of being together. Because each song is

different, some are straight political, some is just fun and silly, but when you see the whole package, it recognizes the beautiful difference that we have to embrace and respect and give confidence to so that people can be proud of those differences. As a group we have to learn also how to keep that and then work together in a way that's respectful and honors each others talents.

**Uli:** Usually the writing process involves everyone having to like it, which in itself is pretty hard because everybody's tastes are so different. I think the general consensus is our best songs are usually ones that everybody is involved in, so it takes a pretty long process. It can be one guy bringing an idea and then all the other people stacking on that idea, or it could be people bringing in a whole piece and people starting to want to put their thing on it. As far as subject matter, we reach from a lot of different places. Personally I try to reach current events and world issues. I think one of our best representations of that would be the song "Coming War" that was on our first record. The way we went about writing that song was Chali 2na got a

piece of paper and asked everybody to write three or four global or societal issues that they thought were important and that's what he used for the words for the song. So if you listen to that song it's like the issues of the band that we feel are important. I try to grab my inspiration from other people and my experiences and from the people in the band too, how people react to certain things.

**Raul:** We have that interaction, that exchange, oftentimes especially with groups or maybe a style of music that maybe has never been, or is not normally, paired with another style of music, some people call it something new. I just feel like it's a respect for past styles that we love, just like it's respect for certain parts of history and certain parts of people. I think because of how we've grown up in an environment where our traditions are family traditions, we're just automatically altered because we're in a new place with our family's travels from different parts of the world to Los Angeles, so that whole change is kind of a natural extension within our music. Some people are surprised by that but I guess it's because we haven't forgotten that historical part of our





selves and our culture and our music.

**Kinetic:** So to everybody out there who tries to classify Ozo or Kinetic or both of us together, they really don't know music. Because that's all it is. Simple music, it isn't no show, it isn't no act, it isn't no "we're trying to do salsa, we're trying to do hip hop." It's just what we've been brought up in. I just happen to be brought up in hip hop and soul, rhythm, and blues and all that, and it just brings an extra attraction to the whole Ozo circus.

**Raul:** It's hard for us because we try to be a collective. Equality is important, we don't allow one person to run all the shit and one person to follow all the shit. You only have so much to do with it. Sometimes you gotta lead, and sometimes you gotta follow. There's obviously some people who are more able to lead, and I think that's because that's what they wanna do with their lives, that's their nature, and people allow you do to that. So we understand that it's a reciprocal responsibility, goes both ways. We have a responsibility to people if we take the lead, and if they don't allow us to do it, then we can't do it. So it's harder to put someone always as a leader, or not a leader, because we don't allow that with each other. It doesn't sit with us well, it's not what we want out of people. We want all

of it – you gotta lead sometimes, and you gotta follow sometimes, but not in any kind of blind way, not with any kind of motivation or power.

**Ya Ya:** Do you feel like you have to be cautions of what you relay to people, like when you allow for someone else to jive or jam off of you, you have to be positive enough?

**Raul:** The only thing I ask of people who say that to me is, OK, you need to have a response, that's it. Even if it's wack, you gotta put yourself out there too. You gotta say, I don't like this, maybe we could try this. Or just some effort so you're not just letting it go. And you can tell when someone's really trying or when they're just bull shitting. So sometimes I'll just demand that of people, like, OK, I'm willing to go there but you need to at least give me a direction or somewhere to go.

**Ya Ya:** What do you feel is your responsibility as conscious artists?

**Raul:** I think the hardest thing to do in any field is to live up to your ideals. I don't think anyone can live perfectly up to ideals, but you know if you're really trying.

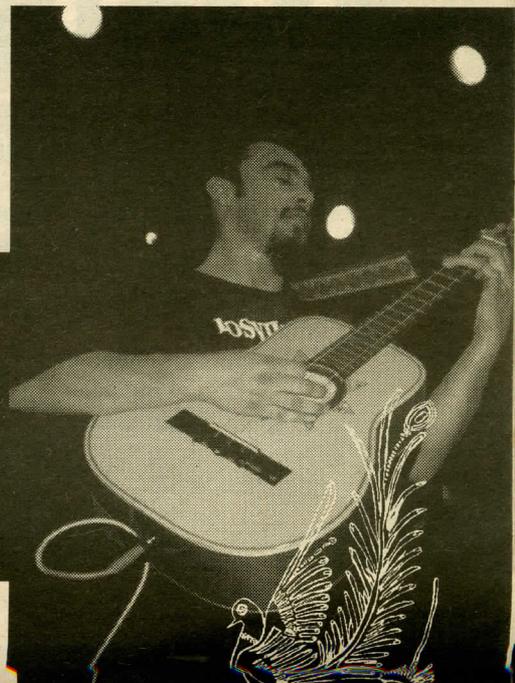
This work that the brothers are committing themselves to is a rite of passage. For some, it's a strain on their family, for some it's a push to create family, for some it's a push to accept, to relate and to honor that which they have. So they're a school with music. They are a social order, they are an urban tribe of warriors who use these things called CDs and these things called DATs and these things called synthesizers and these beautiful drums called the tablas, ancient drums tapped on by brother YemiMoto.

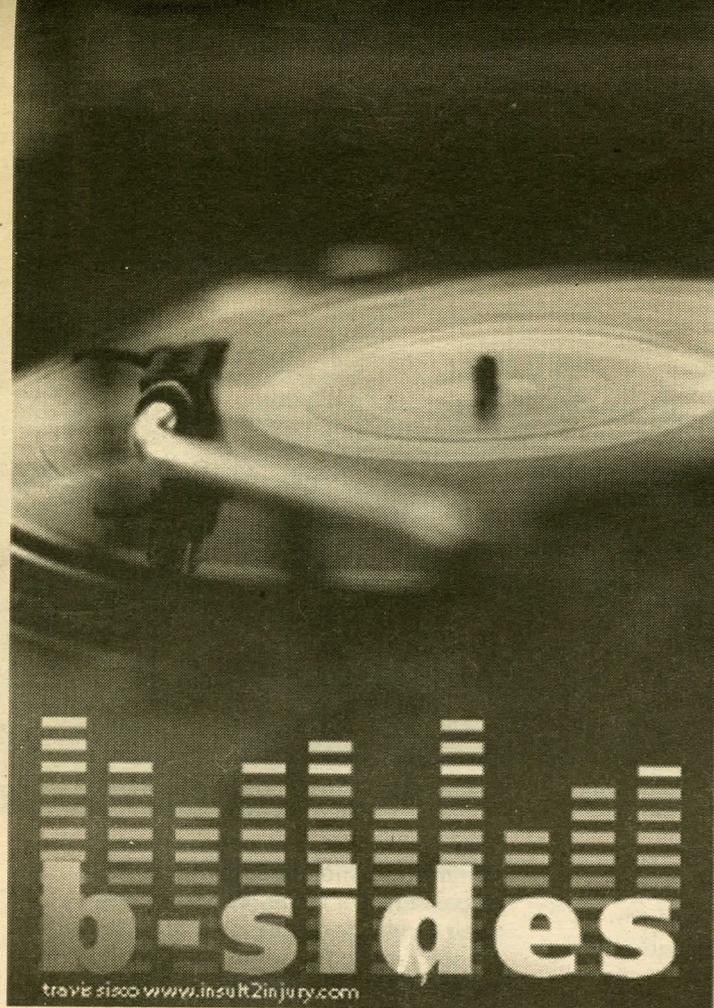
Canciones – songs – with words like bullets ricocheting through the ears, minds, and hearts of people around the world, yielding to no border and respecting the synthesis of cultures, of ideologies, of community practice, non-violent but truly artistic. It's with the word, it's with the heart that they bring their fruits and for us to feast upon them is an honor, yet it leaves them with this taste in our mouth of responsibility in hope so of changing the world this band travels on.

~YaYa



subscribe 1-800-778-8461





- 1 Cultura Profetica "so much trouble"
- 2 Willie Perdomo "nuyorican school of poetry"
- 3 Los Pleneros de la 21 "don pedro"
- 4 Prophets of Rage "freedom fighters"
- 5 Birthmark "P.R."
- 6 Bonafide "creed of the graffiti writer"
- 7 Ozomatli "cumbia de los muertos"
- 8 El Nuevo Tumbao "P.R.(100x35)"
- 9 Ricanstruction "pedro's grave"
- 10 Welfare Poets "no taxation without representation"
- 11 2nd ST8 "a lotta people"
- 12 Cenen "roar"
- 13 Anti Product "it festers in their hearts"
- 14 Tony Touch  
feat. Baby Touch, Bonz Malone & Pedro Albizu Campos "tony toca"
- 15 Piri Thomas "bang bang"
- 16 La Bruja "no fears"
- 17 Willie Colon "borinquen parada 22"

# cultura profetica "so much trouble"

**Cultura Profetica is a twelve member group that has been together since may 1996 Their first CD *Cancion de Alerta* was recorded in Jamaica in 1998 in the Marley Music recording studio with the help of music engineer was Erroll Brown who worked with Bob Marley."**

When Cultura Profetica first started making music they had no idea they would end up recording a CD. They chose to do reggae because it was a music they all liked - it's mellow yet danceable and it is Caribbean. The other and most important reason for this choice is that reggae music usually has social, political and spiritual lyrics. "We wanted to sing music that had a meaning and a message and reggae was perfect for this since historically that's the way it was." But Cultura Profetica incorporate many sounds into their music without losing the reggae roots. Their new CD, *Ideas Nuevas*, is full of jazz and Latino influences as well as ska, trip-hop, and some bossa nova.

"Our first CD talked a lot about Puerto Rico in a way that people from other places might not understand. This new CD is still totally inspired by the things that are happening here but with more consciousness that these things also happen all over and you can write about it in a way that people all over the world can identify. We tried to be a bit more poetic, open to interpretation."

Cultura Profetica perform at festivals in Puerto Rico as well as abroad, for instance an annual reggae festival in Mexico Razteca. Benefits from Razteca go to a fund that teaches music to street kids. On May 12<sup>th</sup> they produced a concert in Puerto Rico where they performed along with 'Los Cafes,' a reggae group from Argentina and Nuevo Tumbao. For booking and contact info email Maria Soledad at [culturaprofetica@hotmail.com](mailto:culturaprofetica@hotmail.com) • [www.coqui.net/raulillo/cultura.htm](http://www.coqui.net/raulillo/cultura.htm).

# Willie Perdomo

"In the words of Muhammad Ali, Willie Perdomo's poems 'float like butterflies, sting like bees.' They have grace and power and don't waste their time, but zoom down the subway tracks to the true heart of New York City, Harlem, which is brown and black, and talks back in its dialect of drugs, death, and destiny. - Ai

"Nuyorican School of Poetry" is taken from *Where a Nickel Costs a Dime*, a book of poetry that comes with a free CD.





## LOS PLENEROS DE LA 21 "DON PEDRO"

The vibrant bomba and plena sounds of Los Pleneros have roots in the coastal urban barrios of Puerto Rico; the group gets its name from the Santurce neighborhood in Puerto Rico which is famous for its plena musicians. Los Pleneros celebrate puertorriqueñidad and Puerto Rico's African heritage in New York in a way that people of all ages and backgrounds can understand and dance to. "Don Pedro," written by band leader Juan José Gutiérrez, honors Pedro Albizu Campos. "The way he died, the way he was tortured, leads us to feel tremendous anger. The entrance of the panderatas represents the voice of hope, the teaching of Don Pedro." To purchase their CD *Somos Boricuas* or for more information, contact José 1680 Lexington Avenue Room 213 • NYC 10029 • 212.427.5221. [www.losplenerosdela21.org](http://www.losplenerosdela21.org).

¡DON PEDRO! APÓSTOL DE LA PATRIA LÍDER DE LA VANGUARDIA Y LA REVOLUCIÓN.

# Prophets of Rage

"freedom fighters"

Prophets of Rage has been representing political consciousness through bangin' beats and rhymes to west coast hip hop heads for years. Prophets of Rage have released two cult-classic albums, *No More Patience* and *Brand New World*

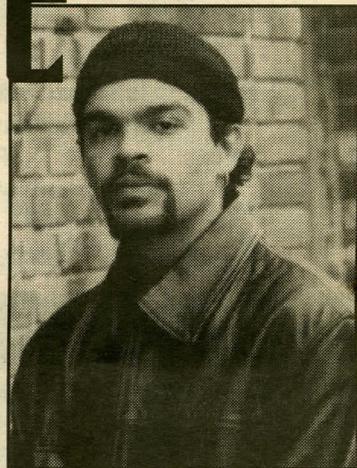
Their third and most recent release, *Blood Stain*, features front man Rico Pabon conspiring with several producers to concoct his bumping boricua sound that's contagious even if you're not up on the politically tight content. Rico says, "Prophets of Rage is about slipping medicine to the masses. Our new music hasn't changed, Prophets has always been about reality."

Rico is known outside of hip hop for his dedicated work to end US colonialism in his homeland Puerto Rico where he lives for a month each year.

"I was born as a Puerto Rican in Queens. And that viewpoint definitely comes through. Even though it's not my first language, I use Spanish in my songs to help people connect back to who they are."

"I never knew that my country was a colony until by chance I picked up the book *Prisoners of Colonialism* when I was 22. Out of the fifteen prisoners, I chose to write to Dylcia Pagán. Eventually I got on her visiting list by claiming to the prison that I was an old family friend, even though I was only three at the time of her arrest. But when I visited Dylcia she said 'Tú eres Pabón!' and asked me if my family was the salsa musicians from Jamaica Plains. Turns out I had been telling the truth even though I didn't know it ... she used to hang out at my grandma's house, but then my family lost track of her when she was arrested. I had no idea who she was. I took it as a sign."

Management: Uplift Music • 510.881.7816.



# birthmark

"P.R."

birthmark is a socially conscious and spiritually subversive sancocho made up of Cuban, Mexican, Dominican, and Puerto Rican parts. Rhumba rams into rock, and reggae into rap, creating a cultural clash and calle crash between bomba and something much louder than a bomb. contact: jose 718.601.8569 • gabriel 212.927.3936 • [birthmark26@hotmail.com](mailto:birthmark26@hotmail.com)

Woman in man breathes life,  
Fresh air  
Someone cry – Hallelujah – Amen  
Fists raise, she prays, God saves,  
Warm graves  
Waiting for the deaf, dumb and blind  
She cries, asks why she dies in side  
She's screaming murder  
Huelga, marcha, armas, guerra  
Sounds like a revolution – Bang Bang

Do it again and again  
Padre Betances  
Do it again and again  
Marianna  
Do it again and again  
Albizu Campos  
Do it again and again  
Lolita Lebron

Tiana, como te quiero  
Le pido a Dios en el cielo  
Libertad para tu tierra  
Con manos fuerte rompes cadenas  
Patria esclave

Caña brava  
Por la buena  
Por la mala  
Venceremos en esta guerra  
Liberemos la madre tierra  
Resistencia, Emergencia  
Quinientos anos en mi conciencia  
Independencia, Independencia

Inside my head I keep going  
Outside this is hell – we keep coming  
She's part of you and me  
Until she's free, then we're not free  
Her soil brought to boil in an anger  
Serpent uncoiled rising in anger

Independencia Ahora  
Puerto Rico Libre

## LIBERTAD!



# BONAFIDE

"creed  
of the  
graffiti  
writer"

Steven "Bonafide" Rojas continues the tradition of the Nuyorican Poets. Building on the foundation that was laid down by poets such as Miguel Piñero and Lucky Cien Fuegos, he brings to that tradition his own hip hop experience: a collision of old and new school that propels the cultural (r)evolution into the future.

## ozomatli

**"Cumbia de los muertos"**

This is Ozomatli's signature mix of hip hop, salsa, and funk, with Chali 2NA of Jurassic Five MCing. Pick up their CD at [www.ozomatli.com](http://www.ozomatli.com) and be sure to get to a live show if you can.

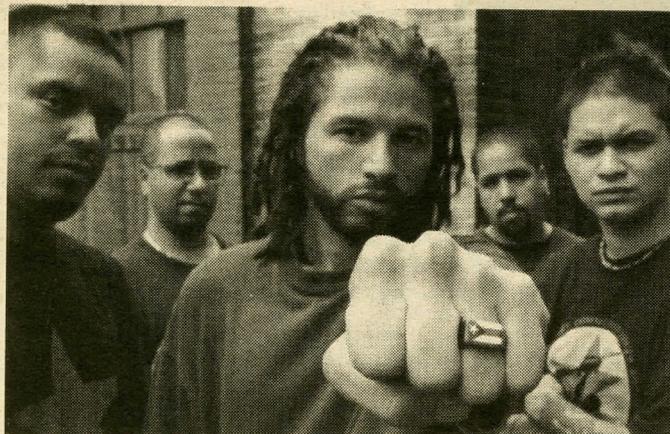


## Nuevo Tumbao

P.R. (100x35)

My name is Welmo. I live in Puerto Rico and have been dealing with hip hop culture for about eight years. For me rap is the most genuine and valid form of expression to present my thoughts about the social order in which I find myself. At same time, it is the only musical expression that allows me to define my daily reality. In the song Puerto Rico Lo Hace Mejor(100x35) I try to present the Puerto Rico that I perceive. "Puerto Rico Does It Better" is the theme of the Puertorican Tourist Company that explains the friendliness and openness that we should have for tourists, always greeting them with a smile. But beyond the beautiful beaches, gorgeous women, talented artists, and excellent athletes there is a Puerto Rico that deals with many social problems every day. There exists a government that is skilled at magic tricks and fabricates a gamut of "participatory democratic processes" where the people come to believe that they decide their future. I believe that there is a hope, and it is here that I enter and present my musical project. Right now I belong to the hip hop collective Nuevo Tumbao. This summer I drop my first album with production by /splice. I hope to keep representing my line of thought using hip hop as the medium. Any question, comment, or criticism, please write to me at [wromero@yahoo.com](mailto:wromero@yahoo.com) or [/splice@trabalengua@hotmail.com](mailto:/splice@trabalengua@hotmail.com).

## RICANSTRUCTION



(see interview page 35)

### "Pedro's Grave"

Pedro's got a pipe bomb set for the fourth of July a detonator slow fuse Loisaida high demolition dope fiends toking Tompkins Square take the world in hand and fuck it When Pedro died the shitstem lied and Hiram and Elias tried as Ponce bled Jayuya spread and Oscar and Griselio fled with dreams and dignity a people could be free through selfless sacrifice a nation could rise Pedro's got a pipe bomb but the boom is on loan broken-English hype-dreams sleep in skin and bone consecrated crack heads sucking strangled tongues take your world in hand and kick it When Pedro died the sanctified Lolita and Boriqua pride as Lares screamed Utuado dreamed and presidents and preachers schemed of land and liberty and country tis of thee the selfish satisfied a nation would rise

[www.ricanstruction.net](http://www.ricanstruction.net)

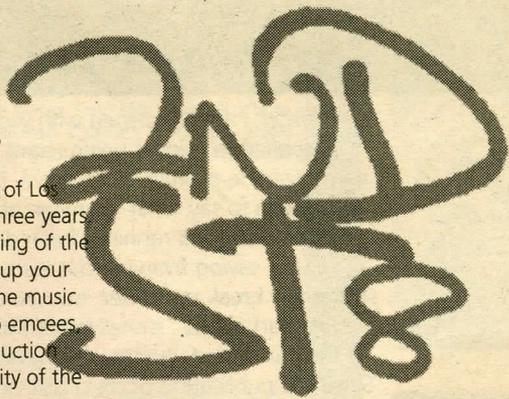
support **Mumia** and get the 'bablyon burning' benefit re-mix single **Abu-Jamal** from **BLU**. also available: the punkumentary **RICANSTRUCTING VIEQUES** featuring **Don Rafa** and 4 bonus anti-videos recently re-issued "the seditious soundtrack to the revolution" **Liberation Day**

# WELFARE POETS

The Welfare Poets are five young revolutionary talents raised in the barrios of NYC who speak with the spirit of their ancestors through the voice of a forgotten generation of African-American and Afro-Latino Youth. Their Music is urban plena, a combination of plena, hip hop, jazz, and funk. Info and bookings: 212.874.7900 • email welfarepoets@hotmail.com

## 2ND ST8 "A LOTTA PEOPLE"

The 2ND ST8 (Second State) is an underground hip hop group from the streets of Los Angeles. They've been performing live and working on music as a group for over three years. 2ND ST8s focus is reaching out to the people and assisting them in the understanding of the various levels of life. With the variety of music they provide they're bound to open up your mind to a higher level thought. Through the combination of beats and lyrics that the music brings, the listener is guaranteed a positive vibe. The 2ND ST8 crew consists of two emcees, who go by the names of SiteSta Raw and the Fraudulent Foe: D.J. Desie, with production done by the Grasshoppa. Their range of music will take you from the had core reality of the streets to the politics of hip hop in the industry. For 2ND ST8 booking information: 310.610.3913 • 310.368.2078



## "roar" cenen

I am an expression of the energy of the universe.

with Joseph I of RICANSTRUCTION on the congas



political prisoner

### Oscar López Rivera:

My message to the young people is basically to struggle for justice and make a better world. It is the young people that have the potential to change the world. Usually one of the things that we as adults - the older we get the more we wish that we had done more and that other generations wouldn't have to go through the same things.

## Anti-Product

### "It Festers in their Hearts"

For five hundred years  
the spirit of discovery  
has blazed the trail to new frontiers  
as centuries come and go  
the stench of colonialism festers  
and i am sickened by the image  
of beauty torn apart (under the veil of progress)

This spirit festers in the hearts  
of those who have carved up the earth  
and built an empire upon  
the graves of cultures with the labor of slaves  
they teach us it sad but deny it was (is) wrong

Explorers or invaders?  
progress or genocide?  
it depends on who you ask and where you look  
because those with the guns  
are the ones who wrote the books  
(1492 was the beginning of the end)

Anti-Product is revolutionary rhetoric, social subversion, and personal politics as punk rock. Coming from a small city in upstate New York which has a very large white working-class community and a very small percentage of people of color, lead screamer and political Puerto Punk Taina found it difficult as a Puertorriquen to find an identity and a space in a place that rejected so vehemently people of color. The punk/hardcore scene in general, and Anti-Product specifically, became a space for those who had been willingly or unwillingly rejected from the mainstream to come together in defiance and rebellion.

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71 BLU 8



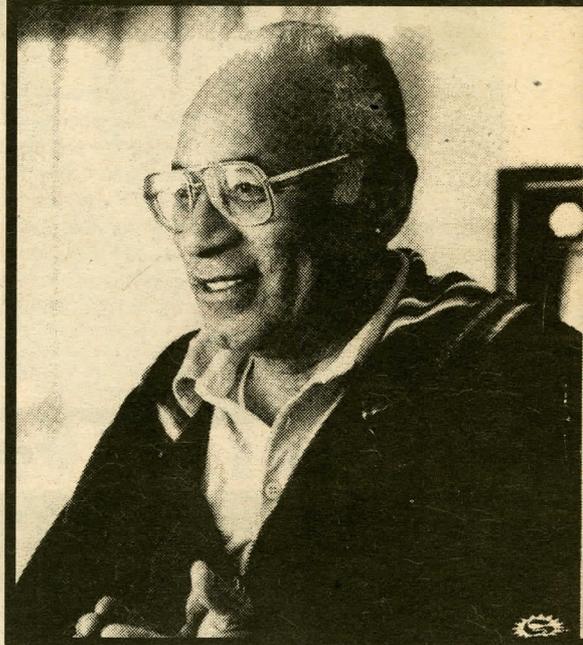


# TONY TOUCH

**Tony Toca features Baby Touch, Bonz Malone and Pedro Albizu Campos. Check the interview on page 37.**

"As a writer, I am concerned with words, names. And names applied to human beings have great importance, since names can be positive or negative, bullets or butterflies. we must learn to say what we mean and mean what we say..."

When I was a kid running down dark ghetto streets, there was a saying from which I learned wisdom. "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never harm me." The first part about "stones breaking my bones" is right, but the part about, "words can never harm me" is bullshit!" Since the publication of his classic account of growing up in Harlem, *Down These Mean Streets*, Piri has been recognized as a master poet, writer, and artist. Check his website [www.cheverote.com](http://www.cheverote.com) for more information or to pick up one of his books or spoken words CDs.



## piri thomas

"bang bang"



"no fears"

## La Bruja

La Bruja the multi-talented does-it-all...from original hip hop to spoken word poetry to afro-caribbean chants. Her one woman shows are not to be missed. Check her album *Brujeria* and don't miss her appearance in *Bamboozled* alongside Mos Def and other BLU artists. Contact: Caridad De La Luz • 976 McLean Ave Suite 324 • Yonkers NY 10704 • USA also check [www.labrujanyc.com](http://www.labrujanyc.com).

"boriquen parada 22"

## willie colon

**is one of the inventors and innovators of salsa - don't miss the interview page 34**  
[www.williecolon.com](http://www.williecolon.com)



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Seeds of Wisdom, Laddio  
Bolocko,

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Dojo, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Dope-a-Delic, Fermin  
Muguruza & DUT,

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Wiggins, Roberto Rodriguez,  
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Mumia, Sundiata Acoli  
**the CD:** Munk Wit Da Funk, Corey  
Harris, Makeba Mooncycle, Los  
Pleneros de la 21, asha bandele,  
Antigua, La Bruja

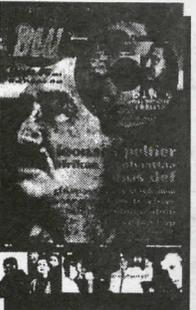
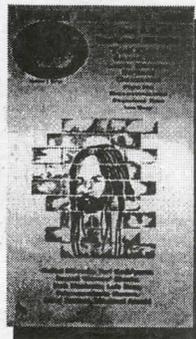
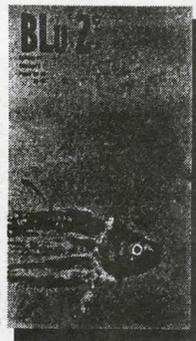
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*Indigenous Reality*  
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**the CD:** Poor Righteous Teachers, NAME,  
Mos Def & Talib Kweli, Quetzal, Zuba,

**BLU 7** \$15.00  
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Sanchez, Yuri Kochiyama  
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## CD track listing

1. cultura profetica "so much trouble"
2. willie perdomo "nuyorican school of poetry"
3. los pleneros de los 21 "don pedro"
4. tony touch cameo • prophets of rage "freedom fighters"
5. birthmark "P.R."
6. bonafide "creed of the graffiti writer"
7. ozomatli "cumbia de los muertos"
8. nuevo tumbao "puerto rico 100x35"
9. ricanstruction "pedro's grave"
10. dead prez cameo • welfare poets "no taxation"
11. 2nd St8 "a lotta people"
12. cenen "roar"
13. oscar lópez rivera cameo • anti-product "it festers in their hearts"
14. tony touch feat. baby touch, bonz malone and pedro albizu campos "tony toca"
15. piri thomas "bang bang"
16. la bruja "no fears"
17. willie colon "boriquen parada 22"