

Rutgers University Press

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Chapter Title: "Hit Them Harder": Leadership, Solidarity, and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement

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Book Title: The Hidden 1970s

Book Subtitle: Histories of Radicalism

Book Editor(s): DAN BERGER

Published by: Rutgers University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hjb9s.12>

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# “Hit Them Harder”

## Leadership, Solidarity, and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement

MEG STARR

Several of the largest and most radical mobilizations of the 1970s were called by the Puerto Rican independence movement. “A Day in Solidarity with Puerto Rico” brought twenty thousand people to New York City’s Madison Square Garden in October 1974, and the headcount for the “Bicentennial without Colonies” protests in Philadelphia and San Francisco was approximately fifty thousand.<sup>1</sup> In addition to these mass demonstrations, notable independence activities of the decade included the ten-day takeover of Sydenham Hospital in New York (September 1980),<sup>2</sup> the occupation of the Statue of Liberty (October 25, 1977), and bombings by the Armed Forces of National Liberation (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional, FALN; 1974–1983) and other clandestine groups. These and other actions consistently drew the media’s attention to the Puerto Rican movement in its many and varied forms, as advocates for Puerto Rican independence continued to pressure the United States and the United Nations for a resolution to the island’s status.

If we consider the Puerto Rican movement on the mainland U.S. as one wing of a larger, island-based independence movement, then the scale of Puerto Rican radicalism in the 1970s increases exponentially. Thousands of university students confronted the police at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan in 1976, after years of militant campus demonstrations there and elsewhere on the island protesting the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), the war in Vietnam, and the conscription of Puerto Ricans into the U.S. military. A united labor movement broke free from U.S. union control, with Puerto Rican strikers supported by a front of six armed, underground organizations. The antimilitarist direct actions on Vieques saw fishermen in creaky wooden boats with slingshots stopping U.S. Navy warships from using the island as a munitions training ground.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not the Puerto Rican movement on the U.S. mainland can be seen both as part of a national liberation struggle with a land base in the Caribbean and as a revolutionary struggle of an ostensibly “American” minority has long been a

topic of debate for the Puerto Rican Left and its allies, as well as for scholars.<sup>4</sup> Puerto Rican activists told me in the 1980s that, during the height of the U.S. war in Southeast Asia, cadre from the National Liberation Front of Vietnam referred enviously to the number of Puerto Ricans living in the United States. If they had had such a numerous “rear guard” within U.S. borders, the Vietnamese said, the war would be over.<sup>5</sup> The United States has maintained a colonial presence in Puerto Rico since 1898. By the 1970s, at least one-third of Puerto Ricans lived in the diaspora, mostly in big cities such as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. The large number of Puerto Ricans living in the United States made the 1970s a time of peril and possibility for those who believed in independence.

This chapter focuses on the New York base of the Puerto Rican movement during the tumultuous 1970s. Some of this history might be familiar to those well-versed in Latino radicalism of the era—the Young Lords, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), the so-called “new communist movement,” and the grassroots campaigns of that time. Woven into the text, however, through both archival sources and oral histories, is a significant strand of history not well represented in current research or memoir: those whose belief in “people’s war” led them to create the FALN, the most active of the clandestine militant organizations of the period. In addition, this chapter discusses the various organizations of their supporters, from the National Liberation Movement (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, MLN) to the white, anti-imperialist New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rico, and others. The militant sectors of the independence movement, along with the solidarity activists who supported them, provoked similar debates and proceeded through similar schisms as befell the Black Power movement and the mostly white New Left. In the Puerto Rican example, the high point of this organizing, including both public and clandestine activities, occurred after many had marked the death of Black Power and New Left militancy. It succeeded in reviving a notion of Puerto Rican nationalism, rearticulated through a Marxist framework. This organizing was manifested both in campaigns for community control as well as in international appeals targeted at the United Nations and relying on political unity across the diaspora. Bringing together committed pacifists, guerilla insurgents, and many in between, the Puerto Rican independence movement of the mid- to late 1970s challenged U.S. colonial control and a growing conservative movement on the island. It also marked the potent rise of a militant Latino politics in an America newly conscious of its “multiethnic” status.

As the mass radicalism in the Puerto Rican communities of the 1960s crystallized, new organizational models and strategies for the independence movement emerged. In the 1970s, the independence movement began to recover from the widespread repression of the 1950s. U.S. and Puerto Rican forces put down an island-wide insurrection that began on October 30, 1950, and included the November 1 attack on President Truman in Washington, DC, by two nationalists living in New York City. Four years later, four U.S.-based members of the Nationalist Party attacked the U.S. Congress. The response to these actions included the

arrests of thousands of nationalists, causing major fragmentation within Puerto Rico's Left and functionally destroying the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, which had led these insurrections.<sup>6</sup> The Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions, the black liberation movement, and antidraft and antimilitarist movements on the island, which had raised consciousness throughout the 1960s, served as examples in the 1970s, bringing new energy to Puerto Rican radicals and their allies.<sup>7</sup>

My own first exposure to the Puerto Rican independence movement came in 1981, as the dramas of the 1970s were beginning to give way to a new wave of repression and struggle. The site was the crowded Ukrainian Labor Hall on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in New York City. The working-class and bohemian Puerto Rican community had turned out in record numbers to see and hear for themselves the legendary, recently released political prisoner Lolita Lebrón. She was a young woman when she first became involved with the Nationalist Party in the late 1940s. Now, despite twenty-five years in jail, Lebrón was as militant and defiant as the day she was first arrested in 1954. She described in detail the times that U.S. attorneys had offered her a quick release if only she would sign a paper apologizing for her actions.<sup>8</sup> She had led a small unit of Puerto Rican nationalists—one of the first women of any national liberation struggle to hold such a key position within a military structure—and shot up at the ceiling of the U.S. Congress to protest persecution of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and the ongoing colonization of Puerto Rico.<sup>9</sup> "I said, 'I'm not sorry, and I'd do it again!'" she proclaimed. When the crowd yelled, in a united voice, "Lolita, seguro, a los Yanquis dale duro!" ("Lolita, hit the yankees harder!"), the room seemed to shake.<sup>10</sup>

Since the 1898 U.S. military invasion of Puerto Rico, resistance had been a consistent feature of life on the island. After years of direct military rule, by the 1950s an unprecedented level of outrage characterized people's feelings about their colonial condition. Puerto Ricans had been drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces since 1917 and fought in record numbers during World War II, yet they were not able to vote in U.S. presidential or congressional elections. One-third of all the arable farmland was occupied by U.S. military bases. Children of this Spanish-speaking island were forced to attend English-only schools until 1915, and imposed usage of the English language has continued, off and on, to be a source of contention within Puerto Rican society. English is still, in the twenty-first century, required in all federal matters (including federal court) conducted in Puerto Rico.<sup>11</sup> Pedro Albizu Campos, a Harvard-educated lawyer and leader of the Nationalist Party, had attracted a large following by the 1930s, and he became a scourge of U.S. authorities. He was imprisoned multiple times in his tenure as head of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party: in 1936 after two nationalists killed Colonel Francis Riggs, the police chief appointed to Puerto Rico and who had repressed nationalist protests; after the October 1950 revolt, during which time, many allege, he was subject to radiation poison; and after the 1954 attack on Congress.<sup>12</sup> He died in 1965, not long after being released from prison following his 1954 arrest, but his

image, especially as an uncompromising revolutionary, continued to inspire independence activists in the 1970s and beyond.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Nationalist Party had been almost destroyed in the 1950s, the 1960s were a period of recovery for independence activism.<sup>14</sup> These groups were joined by the rise of Puerto Rican activism within the United States. Many nationalists in this country supported community struggles as individuals, cautious of formal organizational affiliation. And most new groups were greatly influenced by the civil rights and Black Power movements of the era.<sup>15</sup> One such Lower East Side–based educator, Luis Fuentes, who would go on to become New York City’s first Puerto Rican community school district superintendent, noted that “it was the Black Movement who did everything first . . . then we all followed.”<sup>16</sup> The issues around which black neighborhoods mobilized—economic and welfare rights, school conditions and curricular reform, housing issues and tenant rights—affected the Puerto Rican *barrio* groups with similar intensity.

Many of the Puerto Rican community leaders of this period were not *independentistas* or radicals, but rather belonged to neighborhood clubs based on social networks carried over to the United States from various regions of the island. From these clubs came some of the first initiatives for bilingual education and other human rights issues. “The struggle integrated as many people as possible; there was no consciousness of separation,” noted Julio Rosado, a journalist and organizer on the Lower East Side.<sup>17</sup> Rosado was a young independentista who grew up in the United States and went to college in Puerto Rico. He participated in the grassroots movements of the time, and years later served in the PSP, went to jail for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating clandestine Puerto Rican groups, and was a founding member of the MLN. Some of the earliest forms of solidarity in the 1970s were organic to the situations in which people found themselves. The New York City coalition “Por Los Niños” (For the Children) brought together parents—Puerto Rican, black, Asian, and white—who wanted to reform the school system. Though the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers fought against community control, many white parents and progressive white teachers who wanted to see improvement in the schools joined the community organizing campaigns. During a series of bitter teacher strikes in 1968 and 1969, they helped to keep community-based schools open. For instance, Lynne Stewart, who at the time was a school librarian on the Lower East Side and later became a high-profile criminal attorney specializing in human rights cases, stood on a toilet to hide when the night security guards came by, so that she could open the doors of her school the next morning.<sup>18</sup>

Another significant New York–based struggle—for open admissions and the development of ethnic studies courses and departments within the City University of New York (CUNY), as well as for an end to the war in Vietnam—brought together large numbers of white, black, and Puerto Rican activists. In addition to serving as a training ground for grassroots activists of the 1970s, the CUNY struggle brought together many key leaders who were to become central to the struggles of the

following decade. At one CUNY campus, only two students—Assata Shakur and Luis Rosado—showed up on time for a planned occupation in 1969. Not ones to get discouraged, the pair went off to a hardware store, where they bought chains to bolt the building shut. By the time they returned, their comrades were there, and the blockade had begun. (Shakur went on to become a leader of the clandestine Black Liberation Army and is now living in exile in Cuba after escaping from a New Jersey prison in 1979; Rosado, still a fugitive in the early twenty-first century, is accused of membership in the FALN.) When the police began to arrest CUNY blockaders at campuses across the city, community members marched out of their neighborhoods and brought food to the protesters. They also placed themselves between the students and the police force.<sup>19</sup>

The late 1960s and early 1970s also saw the development of the Young Lords. Begun in Chicago as a street organization, they soon spread to New York and other major Puerto Rican centers up and down the East Coast with a more revolutionary political agenda. Modeled in some ways on the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords centered their work on a combination of community-based empowerment and national liberation through human rights. As they developed, the Lords gained increasing awareness of developments in Puerto Rico itself, and committed themselves to the cause of Puerto Rican independence.<sup>20</sup>

In 1970, the same year they staged a high-profile takeover of the decrepit Bronx-based Lincoln Hospital, with supportive staff continuing to treat patients, the Young Lords attempted to establish themselves on Puerto Rico as leaders of the independence movement.<sup>21</sup> The island-based organizations responded with outrage and declared that Puerto Rican independence movement organizations must lead campaigns from Puerto Rico.<sup>22</sup> This debacle, in combination with FBI-initiated repression, infiltration, and open harassment led many people to leave the Young Lords. By 1972, a small group of remaining Young Lords declared themselves the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO). In 1973, the PRRWO joined with a predominantly white Maoist organization, the Revolutionary Union (RU), and the Black Workers Congress and the Chinese American radical group I Wor Kuen (IWK) in a merger process exploring the possibility of creating a new communist party. After a few years, the PRRWO, the Black Workers, and IWK intensified their criticism of the RU for “trying to submerge people of color groups” in a process “destined to produce a white dominated party.”<sup>23</sup> By 1974, the PRRWO had broken off from the other groups.<sup>24</sup> Some influential former Lords remained involved in this formation until the organization’s formal disbanding in 1976.

The Young Lords were not the only Puerto Rican group to experience this shift. Another barrio group, El Comité, also transitioned from community group to communist party in the mid-1970s. Developed out of the housing campaigns in the barrios, El Comité emphasized community-building and helped to develop the Latin Women’s Collective. The group also called the first conference, in 1971, dedicated to developing shared campaigns for the release of Puerto Rican political

prisoners. The conference helped build efforts in support of Carlos Feliciano, a nationalist whom the government put on trial for planting more than forty bombs in New York City as part of the clandestine group *Movimiento Independentista Revolucionario Armado* (the Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement, MIRA).<sup>25</sup> But as it moved toward building a communist party, *Comité* leader Esperanza Martell recalls, the group's approach grew more abstract and theoretical, less grounded in barrio realities.<sup>26</sup> By 1981, these weaknesses led to a split within and the ultimate dissolution of the group (which had changed its name to *El Comité-MINP, Movimiento Izquierda Nacional Puertorriqueña*, the Puerto Rican National Left Movement), primarily over the issue of whether emphasis on a "federalized" Puerto Rican component of the overall multinational working class was correct and strategic.<sup>27</sup>

The mass unrest within Puerto Rican communities made young Puerto Ricans an appealing population for leftist groups looking to recruit new members. Artist and student activist Elizam Escobar, who later would be arrested and accused of membership in the FALN, described his brief membership in the Progressive Labor Party by saying that the group mixed good intentions with the "naiveté and the typical arrogance of Yankee culture."<sup>28</sup> Community organizer Sandra Trujillo commented, "In general most Left organizations, in chauvinist fashion, sought to incorporate us into their formations, rather than to offer to help us in our own development."<sup>29</sup>

A vibrant organization based in Puerto Rico looked as if it might change this dynamic in the 1970s. The PSP, formed in 1959 as the *Movimiento Pro Independencia* (MPI—Movement for Independence), had become the largest island-based group of the decade. In 1973, the PSP held its founding conference in New York, with three thousand activists in attendance. Chapters soon sprung up wherever the Puerto Rican diaspora had settled: Chicago, Hartford, and Philadelphia, among other cities. Many young people who were originally mobilized by student activism or by the Young Lords now joined the PSP. The U.S. branch of the PSP attempted to combine support for independence and socialism on the island with work around the human rights demands of the Puerto Rican communities in the United States. One of its main rallying cries was the demand for the release of the five Nationalist Party prisoners: Oscar Collazo (the surviving member of the pair who attacked Truman), Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irving Flores, and Andrés Figueroa Cordero. Though the PSP called for organized solidarity from the white Left, it was clear that they would only accept this support on their own terms. They set up a Committee for Puerto Rican Decolonization, which included non-Puerto Rican activists who wanted to organize in direct support.<sup>30</sup> The committee put out a newsletter called *Puerto Rico Libre!*, which was targeted at potential white "North American" allies. It was an auspicious time to put out a call for solidarity. As the war in Southeast Asia wound down, activists who had been supporting the Vietnamese National Liberation Front focused greater attention on other liberation movements.<sup>31</sup>



Dana Biberman, for example, was a veteran of the Columbia Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the 1968 student strike there whose passion for social change had not diminished since graduation. She was involved with the Vietnam Moratorium and later helped organize antiwar soldiers at Fort Dix through the National Lawyers Guild. She first learned about Puerto Rico from Young Lord activist Mickey Melendez, who had much contact with the white Left in the early 1970s in part due to his personal relationship with Jennifer Dohrn, a radical organizer and the younger sister of Weather Underground leader Bernardine Dohrn. Melendez recruited Biberman and several other white activists of her generation to join the PSP's Committee for Puerto Rican Decolonization in 1973.<sup>32</sup>

The PSP asked Biberman to join the staff to organize the 1974 Madison Square Garden rally. "At first I was not comfortable with one organization proclaiming itself the leadership of the movement," Biberman noted; "however, the majority of the independence organizations eventually joined together to organize for the Garden." Called "A Day in Solidarity with Puerto Rico," the rally at Madison Square Garden was impressive. More than twenty thousand people filled the complex. While the majority attending were Puerto Rican, radicals from many movements participated as well. Afterward, the Committee for Puerto Rican Decolonization transformed into the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee (PRSC), and chapters spread across the country. By 1976, *Puerto Rico Libre!* reported that there were nineteen active chapters of the PRSC. Their masthead listed an advisory board that included significant leaders of all ethnicities, including Yuri Kochiyama of the Japanese and New Afrikan Left, Clyde Bellecourt of the American Indian Movement, Ella Baker of the civil rights movement, and radical white nonviolent activist Dave Dellinger.<sup>33</sup>

*Puerto Rico Libre!* contained vivid and detailed stories about Puerto Rican conditions—on the island and in the United States. One issue reported that the Puerto Rican commonwealth government was "shipping" fifty thousand migrant farm laborers to the East Coast of the United States to work for two and a half cents an hour while living in old army barracks.<sup>34</sup> The PRSC arranged speaking tours for island activists working against such obvious abuses. It worked on campaigns against the sterilization of Puerto Rican women, a widespread practice among U.S.-trained doctors on the island, and solicited support from the burgeoning feminist movement. The PRSC supported the efforts to free the five nationalists and on behalf of the Vieques fishermen fighting against the U.S. Navy.<sup>35</sup> "Our best work was when we were really connecting people to the conditions of colonialism in Puerto Rico," Biberman said, and the PRSC newsletter was a vivid way in which such connections were made.<sup>36</sup>

After the Garden event, the New York-based leadership of the PSP invited Biberman and other solidarity staff members on a special delegation. Up in the hills of Puerto Rico, the visitors witnessed thousands of activists in Lares—site of a famous 1868 rebellion against Spanish colonial rule—rallying for independence.



“It was incredible,” Biberman remembers. “People from all over the island came together to celebrate.” The festive nature of their trip was marred, however, by the January 11, 1975, bombing by an unidentified reactionary group in the town of Mayagüez, at a restaurant known for hosting independence movement gatherings; many independence activists charged that the bombing was organized by right-wing Cubans with CIA connections. It resulted in the deaths of two independentistas and the maiming of six others, including one six-year-old girl. Two and a half months later, the eldest son of PSP Secretary General Juan Mari Brás was “mysteriously assassinated.”<sup>37</sup> Despite the excitement of the growing independence efforts, it was, in Biberman’s words, “a very scary time.”<sup>38</sup>

Shortly after this trip, a coalition of Puerto Rican groups, including the PSP and El Comité, asked Biberman to chair a new Committee to Free the Five, a campaign for the release of the imprisoned nationalists. As this was a coalition of independence organizations, it was an honor for a “North American” (white person) to serve as the chair. Biberman was seen as a “neutral” solidarity activist with a history of good practice, important at a moment when the Puerto Rican groups were experiencing an increasingly volatile partisanship. But the divisions proved too severe, and Biberman resigned the post after a “disastrous few months.”

### Turning Points

Many different radical movements in the United States experienced significant splits and sectarianism during the second half of the decade. While blame is often attributed to a variety of issues specific to each group’s own politics, one must assume that there were common trends at work as well. The new-communist historian Max Elbaum admits that “in hindsight it is clear that the obstacles to the consolidation of a mass revolutionary current were much greater—and the favorable factors much weaker—than virtually the entire Left believed.”<sup>39</sup> The PSP itself, and the dedicated coalitions of Puerto Rican organizations working to free the five nationalists, had greater numbers and momentum than many other sectors of the United States Left. Yet they experienced bitter splits and dealt with constant pressure from the FBI and other police forces, as well as from unknown forces. From June 1976 to November 1977, nine activists in Chicago and New York were jailed for refusing to cooperate with grand juries investigating the FALN. Several more would be jailed for the same reason during the next five years, and hundreds of other activists and community residents were questioned in this period. On the island, the offices of the PSP newspaper, *Claridad*, were bombed, and two young independence activists were set up and murdered by police agents on the mountain Cerro Maravilla in 1978.<sup>40</sup> On November 11, 1979, LSP activist Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal was found hanged in a Tallahassee prison cell. He was serving a six-month sentence for a nonviolent civil disobedience action in which he participated with twenty others in Vieques. As anthropologist Katherine McCaffrey writes of the incident, “Prison officials declared the death a suicide, but an

independent autopsy the family had performed concluded that he was beaten to death. Photos of the cadaver showed that the face was heavily bruised, inconsistent with charges of suicide by strangulation." A month later, several clandestine groups collaborated to attack a busload of Navy personnel in Sabana Seca, killing two sailors and wounding ten others in an act of retaliation.<sup>41</sup>

Despite a climate of suppression—felt in the United States through grand juries and in the island through the rise to power of a new conservative party, the Partido Nuevo Progresista (New Progressive Party, PNP), and violent attacks on the independence movement—the PSP moved into 1976 with its campaign to organize a massive protest against the nation's July 4 bicentennial celebrations.<sup>42</sup> The anti-July 4 demonstration, to be based in Philadelphia alongside the official celebrations, brought together tens of thousands of activists from many parts of the Left in the call for a Bicentennial Without Colonies. In a challenge to the PSP's leadership, the Revolutionary Union called its own rally in Philadelphia (not focused on colonialism or national liberation), which brought out another several thousand participants. While many attendees thought that the PSP-initiated rally was a tremendous success, debates were brewing within the organization. The event sapped the energy and finances of the PSP, which ended up not receiving the kind of significant support from the white Left that it had expected. More than that, however, many in the rank and file of the PSP chapters in the United States were disturbed and confused by the organization's decision—contrary to its previous anti-electoral politics and rhetoric—to run a candidate in the 1976 election for governor of Puerto Rico. Focusing on the election campaign removed PSP organizers from the human rights campaigns of Puerto Rican barrios in the United States. The party's poor showing at the polls further demoralized many PSP partisans.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to these debates within the PSP, Puerto Rican independence activists and supporters found themselves in contentious discussions over strategy and tactics. The use of violence by independentistas, especially in the United States, was the most controversial issue within the movement, sparked by the rise of clandestine guerilla actions in the mid-1970s. The FALN emerged with a series of unclaimed bombings in 1973. In 1974, the group initiated its campaign of "armed propaganda" with public communiqués providing the political context to their work. The night before the Madison Square Garden rally, the FALN announced its presence in the United States with the bombing of four banks in Midtown Manhattan, each with holdings in Puerto Rico, and a proclamation: "We are not pure militarists. Therefore we do not oppose those parties or people who believe in mass organization. However, to be truly revolutionary, a party must educate and organize the masses for the seizure of power by way of an organized and disciplined vehicle." The October 26, 1974, statement ended with a message of support for the Garden event, suggesting that it would be "a significant step in the formation of an anti-imperialist front in the United States, which will support the fight for the national liberation of Puerto Rico, and educate the American people to the murderous and genocidal policies of the Yanki capitalists throughout the world."<sup>44</sup>

Largely influenced by the Cuban Revolution, armed actions against colonialism had been taking place in Puerto Rico since the early 1960s. By the late 1970s, four underground organizations joined forces to carry out armed struggle.<sup>45</sup> These organizations carried out a consistent campaign of armed assaults, in both Puerto Rico and the United States, to support workers' strikes, to attack military targets, and to avenge violence against the independence movement. This turn to violent underground actions was highly controversial within the independence movement, especially regarding the FALN, the group whose actions were almost entirely on U.S. soil, rather than, as with the other groups, in Puerto Rico. Many activists rejected violent action as strategically misguided and politically dangerous. The FALN, meanwhile, saw itself as akin to the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) because it operated inside the colonial center. To those in the above-ground movements who supported them, these freedom fighters were described as working toward initiating an armed "people's war" in Puerto Rico. FALN leader William Guillermo Morales said in 1991 that the group had hoped its bombings would win over other people of color and disaffected whites as allies against the U.S. government.<sup>46</sup> Borrowing the phrase and the strategy successfully used by both the Vietnamese and Chinese communist armies, the Puerto Rican clandestine movement emphasized popular education and propaganda through its targets and statements.<sup>47</sup> Even though violence continued to be hotly debated, the statements emerging from the Puerto Rican underground in the 1970s (and 1980s) articulated a vision of people's war that included both armed struggle and non-violent mass action components.

The debates over the FALN became more personal and more fraught after the group claimed its first, and only intentional, casualties in one of its first attacks. The lunchtime bombing of the Fraunces Tavern's executive dining room on January 24, 1975, killed four people. The communiqué accompanying the attack said it was meant as retaliation for the bombing in Mayagüez, operating under the incorrect assumption that only ruling-class diners would be found at the famous Wall Street establishment. Most sectors of the independence movement condemned the action. But a visible and vocal element of the movement supported it. In a statement signed by several top leaders of the Liga Socialista Puertorriqueña (Puerto Rican Socialist League, LSP), including Puerto Rican national poet and LSP Secretary General Juan Antonio Corretjer, the independentistas stated that "the action inspires greater respect for Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. In no way does it hurt them. The hatred the Yankees have for Puerto Ricans could not be greater, nor the discrimination. They hate us from before we arrive in this world; from before the time we leave the womb of a Puerto Rican woman we are hated."<sup>48</sup>

The FALN was responsible for another death, when a bomb it placed in the Mobil Oil building in Midtown Manhattan in August 1977 killed an executive. With one hundred thousand people evacuated from busy Midtown offices, headlines screamed that Puerto Rican terrorists were lurking everywhere.<sup>49</sup> The group continued into the early 1980s, ultimately claiming responsibility for more than 100

bombings and also participating in other actions, such as the simultaneous armed takeover of Carter and Bush campaign offices in Chicago and New York City in March 1980 during the presidential election campaigns.<sup>50</sup> After the Fraunces Tavern bombing, the PSP withdrew its initial support for the FALN.<sup>51</sup> Some from the Puerto Rican and white Left suggested that the FALN was an FBI-led disruption; others believed they were an "ultra-Left" development that was detrimental to the overall movement. For FALN supporters, people's war was seen as the only means of achieving real change in the battle against the U.S. empire. They believed that such a war must be led by a political-military front with a developed clandestine capacity.<sup>52</sup> The basic theory of people's war posits that armed propaganda actions should be used to help break a fear of the state, especially in a time of repression. In addition, this theory holds that those with armed training should work to protect the mass movement. For the sector that followed this view, the FALN was a logical and necessary development: the rear-guard of the one internal U.S. colony that also had a classic "external" colony in the Caribbean.<sup>53</sup> (It is worth noting that the terms of this debate—accusations of FBI-led disruptions or "ultra-Left adventurists," refuted by those who upheld people's war—were, by this time, familiar within much of the Left after years of debates around organizations such as the Weather Underground, the Black Liberation Army, the George Jackson Brigade, the Symbionese Liberation Army, and the New World Liberation Front, among others. Yet with the FALN, the debate took on an added urgency due to the significantly greater number of actions the group carried out relative to other clandestine forces of the time.)

Within the PSP, some young activists were disappointed about the debates and vacillation over support for the newly emerged armed clandestine movement. Several young Latino activists, some of them members of PSP chapters, especially in Chicago and New York, were called to testify before grand juries investigating the FALN. Most of those subpoenaed refused to cooperate with the grand jury, in the spirit of non-collaboration laid out by Pedro Albizu Campos, Juan Antonio Corretjer, and the Nationalist Party of the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>54</sup> A number of these grand-jury resisters ended up serving time in jail, and the debate around non-collaboration and support for the armed movement led to the formation of the MLN (National Liberation Movement), a new, U.S.-based Puerto Rican group.<sup>55</sup>

The MLN began in 1977 as an organization with both Puerto Rican and Mexican members. The Mexican members were from Colorado and the U.S. Southwest and called for the "socialist reunification" of Mexico, which would merge the current nation-state with the northern lands incorporated into the United States after the Mexican-American war of 1845–1848 (Texas, California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming). The MLN Puerto Rican members were largely based in New York and Chicago. In addition to publishing theoretical and practical journals, they worked to defend both the grand-jury resisters—many of whom were MLN members—and, in the late 1970s and afterward, the captured FALN members. The connections between the

imprisoned combatants and the MLN community leaders were more than simply political—political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, whom the government described as a leader of the FALN, is the older brother of Puerto Rican Cultural Center Executive Director José E. López, an MLN founder and Chicago community activist who went to jail in 1977 for refusing to testify before a grand jury. MLN organizers in Chicago testified to the UN on several occasions and played a leading role in organizing to free the five nationalists, in addition to running the Rafael Cancel Miranda High School (now the Pedro Albizu Campos High School, an award-winning charter school in Humboldt Park). By the 1980s, the Mexican and Puerto Rican sections of the MLN decided to go their separate ways, in order to focus upon their own national constituents.<sup>56</sup>

During the second half of the 1970s, human rights struggles regarding the plight of Puerto Ricans were increasingly linked to the overall question of independence and colonialism. The PRSC had provided the initial groundwork for these struggles, and reformist campaigns now seemed possible (the major fragmentation on the Left notwithstanding). Journalists such as Juan Gonzáles, Pablo Guzman, and Geraldo Rivera, all of whom got their start with the Young Lords, helped spotlight key issues of this period, most notably the mass sterilization of Puerto Rican women. In a policy referred to as *l'operación* (the operation), women were encouraged to have a procedure that would leave them sterile, often without being well informed about what the procedure entailed or that it was irreversible. By 1976, a report commissioned by the governor of Puerto Rico estimated that 35 percent of all Puerto Rican women on the island had undergone *l'operación*. In 1977, the New York City Council was pressured to respond, and it approved comprehensive guidelines to protect women from sterilization abuse.<sup>57</sup>

Another issue that gained broad attention during the late 1970s was the island of Vieques. The U.S. Navy had appropriated two-thirds of the small island off the coast of Puerto Rico for target practice. Vieques was not the only part of the Puerto Rican archipelago that the U.S. military was using for target practice. Protests had, in fact, succeeded in removing the U.S. Navy from Culebra, another island that is part of Puerto Rico, by 1975. But this victory only enhanced the navy's reliance on Vieques. Already by the 1960s, many villagers had been relocated to the barren center of the island with minimal remuneration for their homes. Periodic bombing of the western and eastern thirds of Vieques devastated a once-thriving fishing industry. Cancer rates on Vieques skyrocketed, as depleted uranium was dropped from warplanes high above. Throughout the late 1970s, the Vieques fishermen and their supporters organized blockades of the various navy maneuvers. Chaining their tiny boats together to lengthen the waterway blockades, they used slingshots against navy battleships, like David confronting Goliath on the high seas. In the United States, the issue fostered broad coalitions of Puerto Rican organizations and (mostly white) pacifist groups, among others. In Washington, DC, Jean Zwicker—a radical pacifist who had befriended Albizu Campos and been supporting the independence movement since the early

1950s—led an ad-hoc church-based support committee that helped raise awareness about and money for the people of Vieques.<sup>58</sup>

On October 25, 1977—a date chosen to mark the anniversary of the 1950 uprising in Puerto Rico—independence activists staged a bold action in New York that helped bridge the divide between mainstream work and clandestine struggles and included both Puerto Ricans and white solidarity activists. A small group of Puerto Ricans and their supporters occupied the Statue of Liberty and hung a giant Puerto Rican flag across her face: Lady Liberty blinded by Puerto Rico's ongoing colonization. All the major media outlets on the island and throughout the United States carried the image and covered the story. The main demand of the action was to free the five nationalists. Dr. Barbara Zeller, a graduate of Columbia University's medical school and a longtime anti-imperialist activist, was part of the takeover. "We were not recruited for the action by an organization but by personal connections," Zeller recalled. "None of the white leftists knew what the action was going to be [in advance]. It was based on trust, and on following leadership." On the day of the takeover, several "official-looking" people asked the tourists to leave the tower, which they did obediently. The action went smoothly and without significant repression; in Zeller's words, "It felt great!" Panama Alba, a former Young Lord who had gone on to be involved in the campaign to free the five nationalists in New York, was the main public spokesperson for the action.<sup>59</sup>

Less than a year later—on July 12, 1978—FALN leader William Guillermo Morales was arrested after a bomb he was working on exploded in his hands, severing most of his fingers. Morales had been a leader of the 1969 CUNY student strike. After four years and dozens of FALN bombings, police had their first high-profile arrest of an alleged underground leader. In a desperate search for the identities and whereabouts of other possible FALN members, police beat Morales's wife, Dylcia Pagán. Guillermo's severed fingers were taken by the FBI for fingerprinting, as Morales was moved to a prison hospital under heavily armed guard. After several grand juries attempting to locate FALN members, and despite the arrests of Alba and three others around this time on suspicion of FALN involvement (a charge later disproven in court), the FBI had made its first FALN arrest.<sup>60</sup>

In court, Morales proclaimed that he was a prisoner of war in his people's decades-long fight to be free. He invoked the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party's position of *retramiento*, non-collaboration, in denying the legitimacy of the U.S. courts to prosecute a colonial subject, that is, a Puerto Rican radical. The atmosphere of confrontation and repression intensified in response to his bold move. Despite this climate of hostility, a year of intensive campaigning succeeded in moving Morales to a regular hospital for treatment of the injuries he sustained from the blast. With stumps that had barely healed, and bed sheets tied together to form a rope, Morales climbed out of the hospital window on May 21, 1979, and escaped—first to Mexico, then to Cuba, where he remains in exile.<sup>61</sup> Juan Antonio Corretjer, writing from San Juan for the PSP-sponsored newspaper,



*Claridad*, jubilantly called Morales “the handless hero who has slapped the face of God.”<sup>62</sup> The FALN claimed responsibility for helping coordinate the escape.<sup>63</sup>

### The Legacy

Despite these dramatic events—the antisterilization and pro-Vieques campaigns, the Statue of Liberty takeover and the Morales escape—the end of the 1970s saw the decline of many of the independence organizations whose numbers had swelled earlier in the decade. Some of the demands of the time, however, had successfully been met, with at least minor victories won. Bilingualism had come “out of the closet” and was, by 1979, a significant part of the education systems of most major cities. Puerto Rican Studies courses or departments were available at many colleges, and many cities began celebrating a Puerto Rico Day Parade.

The decade closed with one of the central demands of the movement having been met. On October 6, 1977, Andres Figueroa Cordero, one of the five jailed nationalists, who had become seriously ill, was released from prison. His release was celebrated across Puerto Rican civil society, although it was a bittersweet victory, as he died of cancer eighteen months later. Finally, after years of work on all political fronts, involving an outpouring of support from the villages of Puerto Rico to the major cities of the United States, President Jimmy Carter granted clemency to the remaining Nationalist Party political prisoners—Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores, and Oscar Collazo—on September 10, 1979. They greeted thousands of supporters in Chicago and New York upon their release and returned to Puerto Rico in triumph to crowds of ecstatic supporters, ready to continue their uncompromising struggle for the freedom of their land.<sup>64</sup> They returned to the United States for a bigger speaking tour months later and remained active proponents of Puerto Rican independence.

The sense of victory at winning the freedom of the nationalists was, for some, short-lived. On April 4, 1980, police arrested eleven suspected FALN members in Evanston, Illinois. Ten of the eleven adopted the *retramiento* position that Morales had used upon his arrest; they refused to recognize the court system, deeming it a colonial entity unfit to try captured revolutionaries. As a result, they received lengthy sentences, stretching from thirty to one hundred years. Six more people were arrested in 1981 and 1983 on suspicion of being part of the FALN. Although some of those arrested later mounted a more traditional legal defense than the activists arrested in 1980 had, all of them denounced U.S. colonialism in open court. The four who maintained their prisoner-of-war status received lengthy sentences.<sup>65</sup> The charges in these cases, however, were not connected to specific acts of violence. Rather, these women and men were charged with seditious conspiracy—organizing to overthrow the U.S. government by force. Clandestine actions continued to occur in the United States, most notably the Macheteros’ 1985 robbery of \$7.5 million from Wells Fargo in Hartford, Connecticut. The FBI raided Puerto Rico to capture those it thought responsible, leading to



the prosecution of sixteen people in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In response to these arrests, organizers launched a new effort to free another batch of Puerto Rican revolutionaries held in U.S. prisons—a campaign that succeeded in President Bill Clinton's granting clemency to eleven of them (and reduced sentences for another five) in September 1999, twenty years to the day after the four nationalists were released.<sup>66</sup>

Though the fight for a free Puerto Rico continues in the twenty-first century, the transformative and tumultuous events and organizations of the 1970s indelibly shaped contemporary efforts. Pedro Albizu Campos declared that Puerto Rican nationalism comprised courage and sacrifice, and the efforts of the 1970s applied such temerity as part of a global anticolonial upsurge. In a 1978 speech celebrating Grito de Lares, a Puerto Rican national holiday marking the 1868 revolt in Lares against Spanish rule, Juan Antonio Corretjer discussed these revolutionary efforts as proof that Puerto Rican independence was lived as much as won. "I have already seen it," he said, repeating the answer he would give to any who asked if Puerto Rico would be free in his lifetime. "Whoever fights with all [they] have for the independence of Puerto Rico lives independence, is free, is sovereign, is independent, as all our people will be on the day of victory."<sup>67</sup> The strategic and tactical differences gripping the Puerto Rican independence movement of the 1970s were indeed severe, reflecting alternate ideas of leadership and solidarity. Yet this notion of independence as both a demand and an ongoing practice characterized a wide variety of campaigns and initiatives throughout the decade. It was this commitment to both *achieving* and *living* independence that made the Puerto Rican movement one of the most active and audacious sectors of the Left in the 1970s.

## NOTES

1. José E. Velázquez, "Coming Full Circle: The Puerto Rican Socialist Party, U.S. Branch," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, ed. Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 56.
2. Joanne R. Reitano, *The Restless City* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 194.
3. César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Katherine T. McCaffrey, *Military Power and Popular Protest: The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
4. See, for instance, Andrés Torres, "Introduction: Political Radicalism in the Diaspora—The Puerto Rican Experience," in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 1–22.
5. The March 1 Bloc's 1976 critique of the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee makes a similar argument. See March 1 Bloc, *Arguments and Proposals for the PRSC Conference*, pamphlet, in author's files (n.p., c. 1977), 3. The March 1 Bloc, by 1977, became the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN).
6. Ivonne Acosta-Lespier, "The Smith Act Goes to San Juan: *La Mordaza, 1948–1957*," in *Puerto Rico Under Colonial Rule: Political Persecution and the Quest for Human Rights*,

- ed. Ramón Bosque-Pérez and José Javier Colón Morera (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 59–66.
7. Esperanza Martell, Rosemary Mealy, and Julio Rosado, among others, have elucidated over the years of our friendship the central role these phenomena played in shaping their activism in the 1970s.
  8. While she remains proud of her actions in 1954, in more recent years Lebrón has committed to nonviolence.
  9. Although Lebrón fired at the ceiling, at least some of her comrades fired down at the Congress members. Five were wounded in the attack; none was killed. See Clayton Knowles, “Five Congressmen Shot in House by 3 Puerto Rican Nationalists,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1954, 1.
  10. Despite her being a potent symbol of Puerto Rican independence, there is little biographical writing about Lebrón, at least in English. Fragments of it appear in Manuel Roig-Franzia, “When Terror Wore Lipstick,” *Washington Post Magazine*, February 22, 2004.
  11. English is not the only language heard in Puerto Rico that signifies colonialism. Spanish as an official language is obviously a direct result of Spanish colonial rule. Yet Puerto Rican nationalists and independence activists have traditionally upheld Spanish as a symbol of national pride against English as a sign of foreign dominance.
  12. Michael González-Cruz, “The U.S. Invasion of Puerto Rico: Occupation and Resistance to the Colonial State,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25:5 (1998): 7–26; Michael Staudenmaier, “The Puerto Rican Independence Movement, 1898–Present,” in *International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*, ed. Immanuel Ness (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 2766–2774. On Albizu Campos, see Federico Ribes Tovar, *Albizu Campos, Puerto Rican Revolutionary* (New York: Plus Ultra, 1971). A valuable study of Puerto Rican society and activism under U.S. colonialism can be found in Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*.
  13. For a recent analysis of Albizu’s symbolic power, see Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 168–205.
  14. On the island, new groups formed to fight U.S. militarism, to work for the release of nationalist fighters imprisoned since the 1950 uprising, and to join longstanding demands for independence with emergent struggles for socialism.
  15. Andrés Torres, “Political Radicalism in the Diaspora—The Puerto Rican Experience,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 7–8.
  16. James Jennings and Francisco Chapman, “Puerto Ricans and the Community Control Movement: An Interview with Luis Fuentes,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 293.
  17. Julio Rosado, interview with author, May 17, 2008.
  18. Lynne Stewart, interview with author, April 11, 2008.
  19. Rosado, interview.
  20. See the Young Lords newspaper, *Palante*, “A La Izquierda: The Puerto Rican Movement” collection, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College. See also Miguel “Mickey” Melendez, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003).
  21. Pablo Guzman, “La Vida Pura: A Lord of the Barrio,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 165–167.
  22. Iris Morales, “Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 221–222.

23. Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 187.
24. For one take on the mergers and splits that took place within the PRRWO, see "The Degeneration of the PRRWO: From Revolutionary Organization to Neo-Trotskyite Sect," written by "former PRRWO cadres," available at <http://www.mltranslations.org/US/degenprw.htm> (accessed July 16, 2009).
25. The Committee to Defend Carlos Feliciano, *Carlos Feliciano: History and Repression* (New York: Committee to Defend Carlos Feliciano, 1972). After five years and multiple trials, Feliciano was acquitted of most charges and released from jail in 1975. The name of the group Feliciano was accused of belonging to, MIRA, was fitting to its purpose: in Spanish "mira" means "look," and the bombs were meant to focus attention on the colonialism of Puerto Rico.
26. Esperanza Martell, "In the Belly of the Beast': Beyond Survival," in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 183–186.
27. El Comité-MINP, *Revolutionary Left Movement: A Summation of the Development and Split of MINP-El Comité* (New York: RLM, 1982), 48–49.
28. Carlos Gil, "Artist, Writer, and Political Prisoner: An Interview with Elizam Escobar," in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 235.
29. José E. Velázquez, "Another West Side Story: An Interview with Members of El Comité-MINP," in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 94.
30. José E. Velázquez, "Coming Full Circle: The Puerto Rican Socialist Party, U.S. Branch," in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 48–54.
31. A careful review of leadership, solidarity, and national liberation within the United States remains an urgent task, and the Puerto Rican example is critical. Organizations in the (post-) New Left disagreed on the primacy and shape of solidarity and national liberation. These debates and differences played out in work around Puerto Rico and whether revolution would be led by a vanguard, multinational, political party of workers or by the movements of black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Native peoples, with whites acting as allies working to destroy the "oppressor nation" from within. Two dramatic events changed the landscape for the New Left of the early 1970s. The end of the draft meant an end to a tremendous radicalizing force in young people's lives. And the end of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam meant that Vietnam's communist leaders, so often looked to as the center of the global revolution, were no longer viewed as at "center stage." Instead of working with a National Liberation Front formed on the periphery of empire in Southeast Asia, young white activists found themselves working with revolutionaries more or less their own age, who were forming new organizations of national liberation inside the United States. These new groups could never be at the same stage of ideological development as the Vietnamese formations, but their efforts at maintaining a revolutionary space within the United States were far from the common portrayals of them as crazy, chaotic actions.
32. Dana Biberman, interview with author, May 11, 2008.
33. *Puerto Rico Libre!* 8:11 (November 1976), "A La Izquierda: The Puerto Rican Movement" collection, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College. For more on Kochiyama as an activist in both Asian American and New Afrikan communities, see Diane C. Fujino, *The Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
34. *Puerto Rico Libre!* 1:1 (August 1973), "A La Izquierda: The Puerto Rican Movement" collection, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College; See also People's Press Puerto Rico Project, *Puerto Rico: The Flame of Resistance* (San Francisco: People's Press, 1977), 165–166.

35. See *Puerto Rico Libre!*, in author's files; an incomplete collection of the newsletter and other materials of the PRSC can be found in A La Izquierda: The Puerto Rican Movement, 1923–2002, reels 12–13, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueño, Hunter College.
36. Biberman, interview with author, May 11, 2008.
37. Ramón Bosque-Pérez, "Political Persecution against Puerto Rican Anti-Colonial Activists in the Twentieth Century," in *Puerto Rico Under Colonial Rule*, ed. Bosque-Pérez and Colón Morera, 13–48. In 2009, Puerto Rico's Commission for Truth and Justice released declassified FBI documents showing that the bureau knew in 1975 of plots to assassinate Mari Brás or members of his family but failed to inform him. See, for instance, "FBI Skirts Discussing Cover-Up of Assassination Plot," [http://www.verdadyjusticia.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=118&Itemid=154](http://www.verdadyjusticia.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=118&Itemid=154) (accessed December 12, 2009); and Xavira Negggers Crescioni, "Papers: FBI Failed to Act on Plot to Kill Mari Brás," *Puerto Rico Daily Sun*, December 3, 2009, available at <http://www.prdailysun.com/news/Papers-FBI-failed-to-act-on-plot-to-kill-Mari-Brs> (accessed December 12, 2009).
38. Biberman, interview with author, June 25, 2009.
39. Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 320.
40. See flyer, "Grand Jury Chronology" (ca. November 1977), in author's files. See also John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, May 19th Communist Organization, Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, New Movement in Solidarity with the Puerto Rican and Mexican Revolutions, and Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, *Repression/Resistance* (Chicago: Rebelia Publications, ca. 1985), in author's files; Manuel Suarez, *Requiem on Cerro Maravilla: The Police Murders in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Government Cover-Up* (Washington, DC: WaterFront Press, 1987).
41. McCaffrey, *Military Power and Popular Protest*, 90.
42. The official organizing for the bicentennial was itself fraught with tensions and controversy, ultimately leading the celebration to be focused locally rather than nationally. See Christopher Capozzola, "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country': Celebrating the Bicentennial in an Age of Limits," in *America in the 70s*, ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 29–49. For more on the PNP's formation and rise, as well as the violence against independence movement activists in that time period, see Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 223–290.
43. People's Press Puerto Rico Project, *Puerto Rico*; Alfredo Lopez, *The Puerto Rican Papers* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973); Velázquez, "Coming Full Circle," in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 48–68.
44. This communiqué, along with several others by the FALN and island-based armed-struggle groups, was in a booklet printed by several organizations working in solidarity with Puerto Rican independence. See Committee in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence, May 19th Communist Organization, October 30th Committee, Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, and the Sojourner Truth Organization, eds., *Toward People's War for Independence and Socialism in Puerto Rico: In Defense of Armed Struggle. Documents and Communiqués from the Revolutionary Public Independence Movement and the Armed Clandestine Movement* (New York: Interim Committee, 1979), 58. Several communiqués and documents related to the FALN are also available at <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/faln.htm> (accessed July 17, 2009).
45. The organizations were the FALN, the Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Popular (FARP; Armed Forces of Popular Resistance), the Organización de Voluntarios Para la Revolución Puertorriqueña (OVRP; Volunteers Organization for the Puerto Rican Revolution), the Partido Revolucionario de Los Trabajadores Puertorriqueños—Ejército Popular Boricua (PRTP-EPB; Revolutionary Party of Puerto Rican Workers—Boricua Popular Army,

- also known as the Macheteros or Machete Wielders, a reference to the island's sugarcane workers). The MLN released its collaborative communiqué, along with a brief introductory essay, as a pamphlet in 1979 under the title *First Joint Message From the clandestine Organizations to the People*. Pamphlet in author's files.
46. William Guillermo Morales, interview with author and Matt Meyer, Havana, Cuba, July 24, 1991.
  47. Vo Nguyen Giap, *How We Won the War* (New York: Recon Publishers, 1976).
  48. La Liga Socialista Puertorriqueña, "Act of War of the FALN in New York," in *Towards People's War for Independence and Socialism in Puerto Rico*, 24.
  49. Mary Breasted, "100,000 Leave New York Offices as Bomb Threats Disrupt City; Blasts Kill One, Hurt Seven," *New York Times*, August 4, 1977, 39; "Clinton Pardons Terror," *New York Post*, August 13, 1999, available at <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/puertorico/sep4.htm> (accessed July 16, 2009); Murray Weiss and Deborah Orin, "FALN Crew No Innocents: Report," *New York Post*, August 31, 1999, available at <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/puertorico/sep2.htm> (accessed July 16, 2009).
  50. FALN members tied up campaign workers and painted slogans on the walls of both offices. See "Puerto Ricans Strike Two Cities," *TIME*, March 24, 1980, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,921860,00.html> (accessed November 11, 2009).
  51. Daniel James, "Puerto Rican Terrorists also Threaten Reagan Assassination," *Human Events*, December 19, 1981. See also Candida Cotto, "1959–2009: CLARIDAD y la lucha de independencia," available at <http://claridadpuertorico.com/content.html?news=7EFBA5E3304856266FA0BA8A9008697C&page=1> (accessed July 30, 2009).
  52. See, for instance, *Towards People's War and Independence for Puerto Rico*.
  53. Those who adhered to this view included those sectors of the Left who saw themselves as part of (or supporting) national liberation movements within the United States. Parallel to the anticolonial movements abroad, these movements considered the black nation, occupied northern Mexico, Native American nations, and Puerto Ricans inside the United States as "internal" colonies. Groups such as the LSP, the American Indian Movement, the Black Liberation Army, and the Republic of New Afrika all adhered to this view, as did white supporters in groups like the Weather Underground Organization, Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, Sojourner Truth Organization, May 19th Communist Organization, and others. There are many texts that reflect these basic politics; for a recent and reasoned personal account, see Diana Block, *Arm the Spirit: A Woman's Journey Underground and Back* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009).
  54. In the 1930s, the Nationalist Party developed a stance of *retramiento*, or non-collaboration. While initially developed to refer to nonparticipation in colonial elections, it grew to include refusal to participate in grand juries or similar investigations. See Staudenmaier, "The Puerto Rican Independence Movement." In the early twenty-first century, a new round of grand-jury investigations has led to a rearticulation of *retramiento*.
  55. See, for example, Jose E. Lopez, ed., *Puerto Rican Nationalism: A Reader* (Chicago: Editorial El Coqui, 1977).
  56. See MLN, *Program and Ideology of the MLN* (Chicago: MLN, 1987), pamphlet, in author's files.
  57. See Ana Maria Garcia (director), *La Operación*, Latin American Film Project, 1982. The New York City-based Committee for Puerto Rican Decolonization released portions of a 1973 report commissioned by the governor of Puerto Rico, "Opportunities for Employment, Education and Training," which implied that the policy was a means of reducing high unemployment percentages. See the Chicago Women's Liberation Union Herstory

- Project, [www.cwluherstory.com/CWLUArchive/puertorico.html](http://www.cwluherstory.com/CWLUArchive/puertorico.html) (accessed July 17, 2009). This number was confirmed by numerous reports, including by community physician and researcher Dr. Helen Rodriguez-Trias. See Our Bodies, Ourselves Health Resource Center, [www.ourbodiesourselves.org/book/companion.asp?id=i18&compID=55&page=2](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/book/companion.asp?id=i18&compID=55&page=2) (accessed July 17, 2009).
58. See Jean Zwickel, *Voices for Independence: In the Spirit of Valor and Sacrifice* (Pittsburg, CA: White Star Press, 1988). The book is now available at <http://home.earthlink.net/~truebadour/voic-index.html> (accessed July 17, 2009). More generally on the Vieques struggle, see McCaffrey, *Military Power and Popular Protest*.
  59. Barbara Zeller, interview with author, June 22, 2008. See also Melendez, *We Took the Streets*, 199–212; Mary Breasted, “30 in Puerto Rican Group Held in Liberty I. Protest,” *New York Times*, October 26, 1977, 30.
  60. See, for instance, the flyer “The Frame-Up Continues,” about the arrest of four Puerto Rican activists in New York, Ruth Reynolds Papers, series IV, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College. See also MLN, “Guillermo Morales: Prisoner of War,” *De Pie y En Lucha* special edition (ca. March 1977), 9, 12.
  61. The U.S. government, under Ronald Reagan, recalled its ambassador to Mexico to protest Mexico’s decision to let Morales escape to Cuba after he was released from a Mexican prison. See Elaine Sciolino, “U.S. Recalls Mexico Envoy Over Militant’s Release,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1988, A3.
  62. Hector Morales Jaime Martell, “The Completed: Tales of Juan Antonio Corretjer,” *Claridad*, February 22–28, 1980, 6–7. As with subsequent arrests of alleged FALN members, Morales was supported in court by the MLN and a coalition of white solidarity activists that included members of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, the Sojourner Truth Organization, and the newly formed Committee in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence (CISPRI), which became the Free Puerto Rico Committee. Eventually, activists in this solidarity coalition ran literature tables to distribute information about Morales’s health, the situation in Vieques, and other aspects of the independence movement. I remember from personal experience in white neighborhoods that including Morales’s situation as part of our work often led to confrontations or confusion from passersby.
  63. Both FALN claims and commentary from U.S. law enforcement suggest FALN and possibly Black Liberation Army support for the Morales escape. See, for example, “Statement of Special Agent (Retired) Donald R. Wofford,” U.S. Senate Committee of the Judiciary, hearing on FALN clemency, September 15, 1999, available at <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/puertorico/wofford.htm> (accessed July 16, 2009).
  64. Francisco Ortiz Santini, “The National Security Council during the Carter Administration and the Liberation of the Puerto Rican Nationalists in 1979,” *Centro Journal* 19:2 (2007): 150–181.
  65. For more on the cases, see Ronald Fernandez, *Prisoners of Colonialism: The Struggles for Justice in Puerto Rico* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1998); Jan Susler, “Unreconstructed Revolutionaries: Today’s Puerto Rican Political Prisoners/Prisoners of War,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Torres and Velázquez, 144–152; National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, *The Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Violations of Their Human Rights* (Chicago: n.p., ca. 1985).
  66. Many materials prepared as part of the campaign for the release of these prisoners have been collected in Matt Meyer, ed., *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2008), 311–361.
  67. CISPRI et al., eds., *Toward People’s War for Independence and Socialism in Puerto Rico*, 18.