
Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project

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THE WAR ON CIVIL LIBERTIES

OVERVIEW OF THE PATRIOT ACT

by the Rev. Sala W.J. Nolan

On October 24, 2001, six weeks after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Congress overwhelmingly passed "The Patriot Act" – a law "to deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and for other purposes." (See www.epic.org.)

Quickly pulled together in an environment of fear and public demand for anti-terrorist weapons, the law consolidates tremendous new powers in the executive branch of government, and greatly enlarges the government's ability to conduct surveillance, detain immigrants, conduct searches and seizures, and prosecute political dissidents. The Department of Homeland Security has been established. The FBI has an online database called the Terrorist Information System that contains data on more than 200,000 individuals and over 3,000 organizations. It contains information not only on subjects of investigations, but on contacts and potential witnesses as well.

By winter, federal airport security offices began installing computer systems to instantly check personal backgrounds of passengers to alert officials to those deemed dangerous before they can board planes. The tool is an advanced version of the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS). It compares manifests with multiple government and commercial databases. The Electronic Privacy Information Center warns that "each airline passenger will be subjected to an extensive profiling" if the new version of CAPPS is put into place, and attorneys for EPIC have sued the TSA for disclosure on how alarms would be triggered, how accurate data would be, and what recourse passengers would have if they are identified as a threat to national security.

On February 7, a copy of what has been dubbed "Patriot Act II" was leaked to the press. This draft bill was prepared by members of John Ashcroft's Justice Department. If enacted, it would greatly expand the

already sweeping powers of government. The paper defines domestic terrorism very broadly to include "any action that endangers human life that is a violation of any Federal or State law." Theoretically, driving over the speed limit could be considered a valid reason for extensive surveillance.

We are deeply concerned over the vastly increased ability of government to suspend civil liberties and to silence political dissent, particularly as we wage a war on terrorism with nebulous boundaries and no end in sight.

This is not the first time we as a country have responded to fear by clamping down on individual liberties. And when we suspect Arab Americans of terrorist plots based only on their heritage, it is not the first time we have targeted immigrants. We imprisoned dissidents in World War I for speaking out against the war, and we incarcerated Japanese Americans in World War II. In the 1960's police talked about "counterinsurgency," which became a common topic in law enforcement journals, and a U.S. Army War College instructor published "Police-Military Relations in a Revolutionary Environment" in The Police Chief. The 1970's brought SWAT teams and helicopters, and local cops were using military weaponry. For a brief moment it seemed that justice would prevail, when police corruption was being exposed in large urban areas like New York, but after Serpico and the Knapp Commission hearings, we went right back to the old ways, with Reagan's men repressing liberated voices at home and abroad.

Nationwide there are about 6.5 million people in prison, on probation, or on parole. We have known for some time – especially those of us who are people of color – that we are over-policed and living in a society that is incrementally taking away our basic rights. Those who are incarcerated include freedom fighters, arrested because they dared to stand up against the injustices of this government. They are our prisoners of conscience. Like them, we must now prepare a new generation for onslaughts against our liberty. While our freedom fighters have warned us of the importance of maintaining our vigilance, many of us have slept. A Presidential

election was given away by the Supreme Court of this land. The Patriot Act and its child, CAPPs, have given the government the ability to access our financial records.

As we write, the U.S. government is waging a second Gulf war. With the hegemony that arises from the existing military and economic powers of the United States, and given the sense of manifest destiny so often expressed in the actions of leaders in the current administration, we can expect tremendous displays of authority in the months to come. President Bush has said that "Those who are not with us are against us." We are concerned that this philosophy is being applied to our world as a whole, but we are also concerned that it will be applied to our own citizens. Those who oppose war face the specter of being labeled unpatriotic, or in a more extreme case, terrorists.

Where will it end?

A coalition of more than 30 civil liberties organizations has written to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to urge them to review the Attorney General's Guidelines on homeland security. The letter asks Congress to consider how the new law affects First Amendment freedoms of political and religious organization, questions the legal basis for the changes, and asks that there be regular oversight of FBI activities to prevent abuse. The letters may be accessed through www.indefenseoffreedom.org.

We believe it is the duty of patriots to support the rights of all people to privacy and peace.

Nolan serves as Minister for Criminal Justice and Human Rights in the Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ, and with Nozomi Ikuta, serves as Co-Chair of IPOC.

ASSAULT ON POLITICAL PRISONERS

by Jan Susler

Within hours of the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, political prisoners representing many radical movements were removed from general population and taken to segregation, including Carlos Alberto Torres, Antonio Camacho Negrón, Marilyn Buck, Sundiata Acoli, Yu Kikumura, Raymond Levasseur and Richard Williams. This sweep even included Phil Berrigan, a former priest and radical pacifist, and Haydeé Beltrán, who for over a decade has made clear to the government her withdrawal from the

political scene. They were held in segregation for periods ranging from a week to many months, and the Bureau is apparently threatening to transfer Richard Williams to ADX Florence, CO, its most maximum security prison.

None of those moved to segregation on September 11 was suspected of involvement in the attacks carried out that day. None was suspected of violating prison rules, none was provided with written notice of charges, none was offered a hearing or any other opportunity to defend him or herself. And none was allowed to communicate with attorneys or family members to inform them what was being done to them.

A former political prisoner, Anne-Marie Cusac, observed, "To me, when the state does things like this, it's a trial balloon to see how much [...] will be tolerated. What they do to prisoners they can visit on the general public. I think it has repercussions for everyone who has a dissenting voice." How much will we tolerate?

For further information

The National Lawyers Guild, (212) 679-5100
Center for Constitutional Rights, www.ccr-ny.org
Political research at the Public Eye, www.publiceye.org
American Immigration Lawyers Association, (800) 954-0254

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, (202) 244-2990

The Center for National Security Studies, (202) 994-7060.

Anne-Marie Cusac, "You're in the Hole: A Crackdown on Dissident Prisoners," *The Progressive*, December 2001, www.progressive.org/0901/amc1201.html.

Statement by Richard Williams

Note: Richard wrote this statement for the New Year and was returned to general population at Lompoc on Feb. 28th.

Greetings! ...Im still in solitary (administrative Segregation). On 9/11/01 I was locked down and let out 2/12/02. Then on 4/30/02 I was locked down again, so its been 8 months on this stretch of my persecution for Sept. 11. I was told by a high official that my being let out in Feb. was a mistake that I should not have been let out. I'm one of their highest profile prisoners, so that's a little hard to believe. It was an article written in a local paper, and letter written by most of you people that did it. And I believe it was the bust of my lawyer Lynne Stewart in April that led to my second lock-down. Most transfers

take about 6 months. Disciplinary transfers take up to 18 months. I was put in for a transfer 14 months ago, so it seems obvious what kind I am, tho they wont admit it.

Still scheduled to go to ADX Florence, or Marion as affirmed by the denial of my appeal to Wash. D.C. I am proceeding to take this to district court...The heat was finally turned on Oct.31, but later turned down to half to save money, so its cold in here most nights. The warden complains about spending a million dollars in water bills, tho half the cells leak for want of acorn washers that they don't have. This has been going on since I've been here. You would think they'd just order some, instead they cut the heat and half the time don't have supplies such as toilet paper, writing paper, pens and cleaning supplies for the cells. All things we depend on from them, since there is no way we can get them independently. I was told by a deputy captain (a title I've never heard of) that the reason transfers take so long is because all these transfers are costing money that could be spent on tanks and war-planes, and that we are aiding the enemy by our conduct. ...I proposed he let me out then, since I didn't earn my status by any bad conduct on my part. A progress report was done on me... and it was recommended that I participate in programs, work at UNICOR and put a portion of my money away for my release. Seeing as how I'm never getting out, and will never work for UNICOR, their conclusions must be for a different Richard Williams and there has been a mix up.. They welded the lights in the cells closed, so when they blow out the cells have no light...they are still putting people in them and cannot change the bulbs.

My health is holding up, tho my legs swell a lot. Health care is adequate. I was refused a visit because they didn't have a lieutenant to escort me makes me wonder that if I have a medical emergency and there is no Lt. available, how quick they will be to open the door. There is a sign on my door expressly forbidding the door to be opened without a Lt. and 2 guards. ...Family is just fine. I've gotten a lot of letters from different people supporting me, which is very encouraging. My spirits are holding up. They will not defeat me this way. Thank you for your caring and support, and I wish you a good new year. Down with Bush and his warmongers! No war in our name!

From Netdahe, Richard's son: Please hassle (i.e. write, fax and call) the western region of the B.O.P. about the delay in Dad's transfer. His appeals to stay in general population at Lompoc have been denied, and he has

been told his is not a disciplinary transfer...Please contact the W.R.B.O.P. and ask: what's taking so long? Is his transfer disciplinary? If so what did he do? If not, whats taking so long? Etc& Have fun making them feel uncomfortable, I know I do... [ask] questions about my dads case and situation. Chin up, fists up folks! Write: Bureau of Prisons, Western Regional Office, 7950 Dublin Blvd., 3rd Floor, Dublin, CA 94568, Fax: 925-803-4802

Monday, September 24

by Marilyn Buck, December, 2001

the captain appears

we may release you today after 2:00

2:00 comes and goes

the shift changes

i wait and wonder: will other politicals be released today

i wait

hope is the moment's thief

don't wait!

at last: *Buck roll out*

i leap a jack-in-the-box

ready

ready

the metal key clangs just before the 4:00 count

i gasp relief

and hurry through before the gates slam

shut and i am left below

Eurydice at whom Orpheus glimpsed

a moment soon

i step out

a four o'clock unfolding, fuchsia in the shading light

back into the familiar prisoner's plight

THE CUBAN FIVE

Five Cuban agents were arrested in 1998; they were convicted in 2001 for conspiracy and espionage and were sentenced from 15 years to life in prison. They gathered information to defend Cuba from terrorist attacks, and say that new information will prove their innocence. They are seeking a new trial away from Miami.

Throughout March, 2003, they were kept in solitary confinement, under protests by the Cuban government and many supporters. One of the attorneys reported that his client had been denied his legal papers, had no sheet for his mat, and was locked down for 23 hours a day. He was not allowed to have mail, use the telephone, or have contact with other inmates. He showed up at the visit in leg irons and handcuffed. For more information, see <http://www.freethefive.org>

Statement by the Cuban National Assembly

April 1st, 2003, Havana

As a result of public denunciation and numerous messages of protest, the Government of Washington decided to put an end to the arbitrary solitary confinement that it had imposed to Gerardo Hernández, René González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González, and to place them again in the general penal population, although maintaining against them several completely discriminatory restrictions.

It has been demonstrated that during a month, the Government of the United States violated the rights of the prisoners, of their lawyers and the norms of due process, seriously damaging the appeal process. Taking them now out of "the hole", the U.S. Government is proving that never existed a "national security" justification and that it was obliged to go back because of the denunciations and protests.

The U.S. Government has not finished yet with its arbitrary, discriminatory and illegal actions. It still maintains inadmissible prohibitions related to the use of the phone, the correspondence, the consular access and the family visits, that should be completely lifted.

It was proved the strength of the international solidarity and its capacity to act with efficacy, even in very difficult circumstances, due to the fact that the information about this issue in the big media was virtually zero.

The Government of the United States in March, 2003 has repeated the methods and techniques that it used before to prevent a fair trial, that is precisely the principal question that the Atlanta Appeal Court should consider. That is the best proof to demonstrate that that Court should dismiss the Miami farce and order the release of the five prisoners.

It is necessary to multiply and intensify the solidarity, now that we have this additional proof about the serious misconduct of the U.S. Government.

The solidarity took them out of "the hole". The solidarity will free them.

THE NEW YORK PRISONERS

The New York State Taskforce on Political Prisoners is committed to winning the release of the political prisoners in the New York State: Abdul Majid, Bashir Hameed, David Gilbert, Herman Bell, Jalil Muntaqim, Sekou Odinga, and Seth Hayes. All of these men have already served more than 20 and 30 years of their sentences; all were convicted of offenses stemming from political activities for human rights and liberation.

The Taskforce is coordinated by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement in Brooklyn and includes representatives of the Jericho Movement, the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee, lawyers, activists, ex-political prisoners, and members of the political prisoners' families. Kamel Bell, Herman Bell's son, moved to New York to work on the parole campaign of his father (he goes to the board in January, 2004). Kamel, Anoché Odinga, Sekou Odinga, and Abdul-Malik Majid (and Crystal Hayes, who is active long-distance) are organizing to make visible the humanity of the prisoners and the suffering of their families.

The Taskforce has produced a petition to Gov. Pataki for the release of the prisoners. We also work on the individual parole campaigns.

The past year was an extremely difficult one in the post September 11 climate. Both Jalil Muntaqim and Seth Hayes were denied parole, despite excellent presentations and extensive documentation of their good prison records, job offers, and letters of recommendation. But even in the midst of the intransigence of the parole board, State Representative Roger Green and City Councilman Charles Barron have helped fight for the release of the prisoners. Councilman Barron attempted to introduce a resolution calling for the prisoners' release in the City Council, and held two press conferences on the subject. The resolution was blocked from being presented to the Council, but we hope it will be presented and acted upon in the future.

We need letters of support for the clemency petition and to get decent medical care for Seth Hayes, who suffers from diabetes and hepatitis C. For a copy of the petition, biographies and legal information on the prisoners, and for information on Seth Hayes' medical issues, please contact: Monifa Akinwale Bandele or Kamel Bell at 719-254-8800; monifabandele@hotmail.com; KamelJBell@hotmail.com.

UPDATES: FORMER POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE US

JOSÉ SOLÍS FREED FROM PRISON

On November 22, Dr. José Solís Jordán was released from prison and returned to his wife, six children, and to the faculty of the University of Puerto Rico.

Dr. Solís was arrested in 1998 as part of a government effort to frame Chicago activist and professor José López for a bombing actually planned and carried out by admitted FBI agent-provocateur Rafael Marrero in 1992. When Dr. Solís refused to incriminate Prof. López, he was convicted and sentenced to serve over four years in prison. During his years in prison, Dr. Solís taught, held political discussions, and reached out to prisoners without other support. When he was released, prison officials thanked him for the many constructive contributions he made to prison life.

THE ELEVEN PUERTO RICANS

by Jan Susler

On September 10, 1999, 11 Puerto Rican political prisoners were released as a result of President Clinton's commutations. They were received as national heroes and welcomed home. After a brief period of celebration and family reunion, they found jobs ranging from teaching (Carmen Valentín) and art (Elizam Escobar) and crafts (Adolfo Matos, Alicia and Lucy Rodríguez) to mentoring high school students (Alejandrina Torres) to television or commercial production (Dylcia Pagán, Ricardo Jiménez, Alicia Rodríguez) to working for attorneys (Alberto Rodríguez, Ricardo Jiménez), physicians (Edwin Cortés), contractors (Luis Rosa), church agencies and artists (Lucy Rodríguez). They have resumed their roles as parents, sons and daughters, aunts and uncles, caring for aging parents or spouses, reconstructing relationships with their children and grandchildren, and are much in demand as speakers.

The commutation required them to comply with parole conditions which have restricted their travel and prevented their association with each other and many other independence movement leaders. Nine of the former prisoners are scheduled to complete their parole conditions in 2007 to 2008. The Parole Commission is considering the petition for early termination after three years.

The anti-terrorist hysteria reigning in Washington has

resulted in subjection to urinalysis, increased supervision, and warnings that their relatives and co-workers may be visited by officials, despite their compliance with their reporting conditions.

SILVIA BARALDINI

Silvia Baraldini won the struggle to be repatriated to Italy in August, 1999, and was able to be near her mother, Maria Dolores, before Maria died in April, 2001. Silvia was held in the maximum security in Rebibbia and in October, 2000, she transferred to the Policlinico Gemelli, for two breast tumor operations. (US authorities had withheld the diagnosis from Silvia and representatives of the Italian government.) In April 2001, after Silvia spent seven months under guard in the hospital, the Italian Constitutional Court ruled that the accord signed with the US did not override her rights (to health and life) guaranteed to all Italian citizens. Silvia was placed under house arrest, granted a work permit, and joined the editorial staff of *Latinamerica*.

The oversight tribunal recently extended the house arrest until November 2003, but the court revoked her work permit and cut in half the hours that she is allowed out of the house. She is attempting to regain the work permit and finish her Master's degree at Ca' Foscari, Venice's university.

Thanks again to all who supported the campaign for Silvia's freedom. Silvia can be reached at baraldini@mclink.it

LAURA WHITEHORN

Laura Whitehorn was released from federal prison in August, 1999 and lives in New York City with her girlfriend, Susie Day. She works as a writer, writing for POZ Magazine on issues relating to HIV. She works with a variety of political groups on campaigns towards the release of political prisoners, and is now focusing on the parole campaigns of Marilyn Buck and the New York state political prisoners, especially Herman Bell, whose first parole hearing will be in early 2004.

TRIBUTES TO STANDING DEER AND LEONARD PELTIER

Former political prisoner Standing Deer was stabbed to death on Monday, January 20 in his home in Houston. During his 25-year sentence in federal prison, he became friends with Leonard Peltier after exposing a prison administration plot to kill him. Last summer, Standing Deer sent the following statement honoring Leonard:

Standing Deer's Message to the People

June 26, 2002

Greetings to all my sisters and brothers, I pray you, your many relatives, and those you love are well and happy and enjoying all the blessings our Mother has to offer.

My name is Standing Deer. I've been locked away in supermax Iron Houses for the last quarter-of-a-century. Eight months ago they got weak and let me go, and while I'm happy to be out of prison I'll never be free until my brother Leonard Peltier is free. So as we approach another June 26 which marks the 27th anniversary of the fire at Oglala, South Dakota, where Peltier was framed and lost his freedom we must remember this indomitable warrior who is being robbed of his very life because of the lies and injustice of the takers of the fat. Leonard has been a captive of the united states going on 27 years for a crime he didn't even commit. I've known him for 25 of those years and I've seen them force him to exist in a cage so small that had he been a dog the Humane Society would have closed the prison down. During these years his keepers have subjected him to hideous treatment in an effort to break his will and Spirit but he is protected by the Spirit of Crazy Horse and his warrior heart remains strong and unyielding serving as an inspiration to us all. Make no mistake about it: Peltier is an innocent man! He has committed no crime! He is the victim of a system of injustice which operates outside the moral boundaries that just people claim to live by.

Brothers and Sisters, Leonard Peltier is a Prisoner of War unjustly held captive in his own land by the descendants of the very sea pirates who murdered his great grandmothers & great grandfathers, decimated his

People., and stole Mother Earth out from under their feet.

Peltier is the longest held Native Prisoner of War in this country and on June 26th People all across Turtle Island will be holding events to honor this courageous brother. In Houston we will be having a march dedicated to Leonard's freedom. You are all invited to attend. Houston will be the only city to have Leonard's grandson, Cyrus, to speak to us with a message directly from his grandfather in Leavenworth prison. Please come out for this June 26th celebration. We want you to be there!

LEONARD PELTIER'S PAROLE APPEAL

Peltier attorneys will appeal the recent denial of his 1999 Habeas Corpus. The Court took nearly three years to finally address the issues he raised. This is a high watermark of Leonard's legal proceedings and presents Leonard with a good chance to be freed.

Leonard seeks to overturn the Parole Commission's refusal to consider parole until December 2008. By then, Leonard will have served almost double the time the federal guidelines require for consideration for parole. He has already served over 11 years beyond these guidelines. The appeal asks whether there is a rational basis for extending Leonard's parole so far beyond the normal guideline. Leonard needs your support to ensure that the courts finally conduct a fair review of his case!

Quest for documents

The government still is withholding approximately 100 thousand more pages of documents. After attempting for over a year to amicably acquire these documents which are being withheld by various government agencies concerning Leonard's case, his attorneys have filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) complaints against the Executive Office of United States Attorneys and the FBI and CIA in Minneapolis and Washington.

Please write letters to the editors of local newspapers to help support efforts in acquiring these documents!

NO to War, YES to Peace

by Oscar López Rivera

The US war against Iraq has existed for over a decade, but its real motivation is difficult to decipher. The public explanation (orchestrated by the government and its propaganda machine) is meant to fan patriotic feelings so that Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, and other Bushites can finish the war that they began.

Why the war against Iraq? The strategy began in 1981 with the Zionist attack on Iraqi nuclear plants. The principal aim was and is to foment the instability of the Arabic countries, so that none can develop, become self-sufficient, or transform itself to a unifying force with sufficient military might to defend Arabic interests... and threaten the interests of the US and Israel.

Of the Arabic countries, Iraq had the greatest potential to become a developed, self-sufficient, military power. Iraq is the second greatest producer of oil in the world; it has enormous reserves of natural gas; water in abundance and fertile land; and it had a solid infrastructure and advanced intellectual/technical class.

After the Zionist attacks, the war between Iraq and Iran let the US establish a relationship with Saddam Hussein. In 1983, Rumsfeld sealed a pact with Saddam, using a Reagan/Bush line of credit of billions of dollars, to buy arms from the US arms industry, including biological and chemical weapons. The US hid the transactions using the Department of Agriculture and a shadow bank.

The Iran-Contra hearings revealed that the US had sold arms both to Saddam Hussein and to Iran. Thus the US and Zionists had the Iranians and Iraqis mutually waste, destabilize, and debilitate themselves. Millions of Iranians and more than a million Iraqis lost their lives, while the Kurds suffered massacre and exile.

The US used the Iran-Iraq to sell arms to the Arabic countries and keep the US arms industry afloat. The Arabic countries never used these arms to defend their own interests, nor to attack the Zionists. They have only used them when the US gave permission, as during the Persian Gulf War, or as war toys.

Instead of using the money for their development, the Arabic countries squandered it in this scam. Their

poverty, lack of development, and instability demonstrates the effectiveness of this strategy.

The conditions which existed in Iraq and in the other Arabic countries are ideal for the Bushites. If Iraq could not defend itself and confront the US in 1991, they will be able to do so much less today.

But the US did not anticipate opposition by a world that is fed up with the wars and arrogance of the imperialist ogre. This world has taken to the streets with valor and indignation to protest the war and to demand peace.

For the US to occupy all of Iraq, overthrow Saddam Hussein, and eliminate the few military forces there is nothing for it. But what may come next? How will the Arabic people, the Islamic fundamentalists and progressives, and the rest of the world, who are against letting the US and its allies recolonize the planet and annex the rest of the world, respond?

The US can change the regime of Saddam Hussein and install a puppet government - as in Afghanistan - which lets them control the oil, the natural gas, and the other Iraqi resources that the ogre so craves. But if the Turks, the Kurds, the Iranis, and the Arabic peoples who are convulsed and impoverished refuse to collaborate and start to resist, what will happen then? If the Latin Americans who are opposing the politics of US neo-liberalism continue resisting, what will happen then? And if the declarations of Point Alegre and of the Non-Aligned Nations start to be implemented, what will happen then?

The majority of the people of the world oppose the war, proving Mark Twain's claim that it was a small handful of loudmouths who were promoting the US imperialist war. The Bushites, Blair, Aznar, and the Zionists are those loudmouths, and a truly small handful compared to the millions humans in the world who shout NO to the war and demand peace.

Those of us in the bowels of the ogre must unite with those around the world who shout for peace and NO to war. Now, we are just a stone in the boots of the ogre. But if we struggle and resist, we can be thousands, millions, and billions of stones in its boots, to stop marching this country towards war. **NO TO WAR, YES TO PEACE - WE WANT A BETTER WORLD.**

**REV. MICHAEL YASTUAKE AND MARIANO DEL VALLE REMEMBERED;
REV. JOSE TORRES HONORED**



On Saturday, March 29, 2003, special wings of the new home of the Puerto Rican Cultural in Chicago were dedicated to the Rev. Michael Yasutake, former Executive Director of the Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project, Mariano del Valle, and Rev. José Torres. The newly-renovated building is located at 2739-41 W. Division St.

Until his unexpected death in December, 2001, Mike was a passionate, courageous fighter for justice and advocate for political prisoners. He had been the supervisor of former Puerto Rican political prisoner Carmen Valentín and was a tireless friend of the Puerto Rican independence movement.

In August, 2001, just months before Mike's death, Mariano del Valle also died unexpectedly. Mariano was a tireless worker whose brought tremendous creativity and ingenuity to the building and maintenance of many of the community projects associated with the Cultural Center.

Rev. José "Viejo" Torres and his family were present at the dedication of the Center on March 29 and again on April 6 at the naming of the corner of Hamlin Ave. and Potomac, in his honor. This corner borders the First Congregational Church of Chicago, from which Viejo retired after decades of service. Many people know of Viejo's courageous, prophetic, and faithful pastoral leadership in Chicago's Latino and Puerto Rican community, and in solidarity with other oppressed peoples. He marched with Dr. King in Selma and joined with ecumenical and secular community leaders in the struggle to improve the lives of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago, and was one of the founders of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. He also endured sixteen years of separation from his wife, Alejandrina Torres, while she was a political prisoner; his son, Carlos Alberto Torres, remains a political prisoner in Oxford, WI.

The Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project joins the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and community in celebrating the life, ministry, and witness of these three extraordinary leaders.

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