



November 24, 2014

Mr. Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Chancellor of the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico, our oldest and most prestigious institution of higher education, I write on behalf of Puerto Rican prisoner Oscar López-Rivera in order to respectfully request that you grant him an executive pardon and order his immediate release from prison.

In doing so, I join the voices of our academic community and all sectors of our society who have expressed overwhelming support for the cause of Oscar's freedom. Among those who favor his liberation are members of all political parties in Puerto Rico, our Governor Alejandro García Padilla, and various distinguished Puerto Rican members of the U.S. Congress. In the international realm, Oscar López's long imprisonment has also been severely denounced by human rights advocates such as Nobel peace laureates Rigoberta Menchú from Guatemala, Mairead Corrigan Maguire of Northern Ireland, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel from Argentina, and Desmond Tutu from South Africa.

In 1981, Oscar López was arrested and convicted of seditious conspiracy and other charges, none of which stemmed from the injury or death of any person. Nevertheless, and contrary to the most basic principles that apply to reasonable and proportionate punishment, Oscar was sentenced to 55 years in prison. An additional term of 15 years was added in 1988 when convicted of conspiring to escape. Today, after 33 years incarcerated, 12 of which were served in solitary confinement, Oscar López is considered to be among the world's political prisoners longest held in prison. He is now 71 years old and has endured a disproportionate punishment which by all standards should be considered cruel and unjustified.

Oscar and you have some important things in common. Although born on islands thousands of miles apart from each other, both of you spent many of the best years of your youth working as community organizers in Chicago, convinced that it was possible to redress social injustice by constructing a fairer and more peaceful world. Towards that end, Oscar created important social platforms, convinced of the transforming role of arts and cultural programs in inner city neighborhoods. As a community leader, he worked hard to improve the dire conditions faced by the Puerto Rican diaspora.

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Patrono con Igualdad de Oportunidades en el Empleo M/M/V/I

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At that time, Oscar was also a witness to what you eloquently described in your acclaimed memoir DREAMS FROM MY FATHER as the: *"...desperation and disorder of the powerless: how it twists the lives of children on the streets of Jakarta or Nairobi in much the same way as it does the lives of children in Chicago's South Side, how narrow the path is for them between humiliation and untrammelled fury, how easily they slip into violence and despair. I know the response of the powerful to this disorder ... and when the disorder spills out of its proscribed confines, a steady, unthinking application of force, of longer prison sentences and more sophisticated military hardware- is inadequate to the task. I know the hardening of lines, the embrace of fundamentalism and tribe, dooms us all."*

The lifelong political principles embraced by Oscar arise from concerns similar to those you have so forcefully expressed. In the context of his principled opposition to what he considers to be the continued U.S. colonial occupation of Puerto Rico, Oscar's path and yours took different courses that, decades later, can now meet again.

The cause for the liberation of Oscar López Rivera is a human rights issue. It is precisely this understanding that has generated the widespread consensus in favor of his long-awaited freedom. This is a unique opportunity for you as President to demonstrate the commitment of the United States to the human rights ideals so prominently proclaimed in international affairs.

In view of all the above considerations, I believe that the time is ripe for you to take the lead and, as you so well stated in your eulogy during President Nelson Mandela's funeral, proceed to *"free not just the prisoner but the jailer as well."*

This request in favor of freedom for Oscar has the unanimous support of all members of the Academic Senate of the University of Puerto Rico's flagship campus. We all hope that, as someone who has fought against discrimination based on racial origin and political views, as in Mandela's case, you are sympathetic to the humane considerations that justify the liberation of Oscar López Rivera.

With all due respect,



Carlos E. Severino Valdez, Ph.D.
Chancellor

Enclosure

Certificación Núm. 51

Año Académico 2014-2015

Yo, CLARIBEL CABÁN SOSA, Secretaria del Senado Académico del Recinto de Río Piedras, Universidad de Puerto Rico, CERTIFICO QUE:



*Senado Académico
Secretaría*

El Senado Académico en la reunión ordinaria celebrada el 20 de noviembre de 2014, consideró las **Preguntas sobre el Informe del Rector**, y acordó:

- Hacer suya la carta del señor Rector, Dr. Carlos E. Severino Valdez, dirigida al Presidente de los Estados Unidos, Hon. Barack Obama. En dicha carta se solicita indulgencia para la excarcelación del preso político puertorriqueño Oscar López Rivera.
- Copia de la carta dirigida al Presidente de los Estados Unidos forma parte de la presente Certificación.

Y PARA QUE ASÍ CONSTE, expido la presente Certificación bajo el sello de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, a los veintiún días del mes de noviembre del año dos mil catorce.


Claribel Cabán Sosa
Secretaria del Senado

rema

Anejo

Certifico correcto:


Carlos E. Severino Valdez, Ph. D.
Rector





*Senado Académico
Secretaría*

Certification No. 51


Academic Year 2014-2015

I, **CLARIBEL CABÁN SOSA**, Secretary of the Academic Senate of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, hereby certify that:

The Academic Senate, during its ordinary meeting held on November 20, 2014, considered the agenda item **Questions Concerning the Chancellor's Monthly Report**, and agreed on the following:

- To endorse Chancellor Dr. Carlos E. Severino Valdez's letter to The Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States. This letter requests clemency for the Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera.
- A copy of the letter to the President of the United States is attached to this document.

AND IN WITNESS THEREOF, I hereby issue the present Certification with the seal of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, on the twenty-first day of November in the year two thousand and fourteen.


Claribel Cabán Sosa
Secretary of the Academic Senate

Annex

I certify as correct:


Carlos E. Severino Valdez, Ph. D.
Chancellor

