

Letter from Oscar López Rivera to his daughter Clarisa

On beginning his 35th year in US prisons, May 29, 2016

For the international Day of Solidarity with Oscar López Rivera, June 20, 2016

Projected to take place in 35 countries around the world

Dearest Clarisa:

What is freedom? Freedom, especially when politicians talk about it, is often stripped of its essence and meaning and is left as inane as the minds and hearts of those individuals who have the power to define it for their convenience. But for me freedom is the most important goal to be achieved by human beings who are victims of colonialism, neo-colonialism and slavery because they have never had the opportunity to enjoy freedom and to exercise their inalienable and most fundamental right of self-determination.

During the 73 years i've lived in this world i've been a subject of u.s. colonialism. The u.s. government has kept Puerto Rico under its colonial yoke and chains since it decided to invade and occupy PR militarily in 1898. From that moment on it has used every means at its disposal to make sure that Puerto Rico will not be an independent and sovereign nation. Any Puerto Rican who has dared to struggle to eradicate colonialism and to make Puerto Rico an independent and sovereign nation has been considered a mortal enemy of the u.s. government and treated as such. It has persecuted, criminalized, imprisoned, exiled and even assassinated them without any qualms or respect for their rights, their dignity and life. To see how true this is, every Puerto Rican and every freedom- and justice-loving person should read the history of the courageous women and men who have come under the attacks of the u.s. government, especially of the ones who spent years in prison and lived to talk and write about their experiences.

i have never experienced freedom. But i yearn and hope for it. The yearning and hoping have been part of the energizing force that has kept me going and continuing to struggle and resist. i have been able to follow some of the struggles of colonized people, resisting and gaining independence for their country. i have images of some of them celebrating their victories. Two images that are most vivid in my mind are of Patrice Lumumba—one when he was struggling and delivering a speech as President of the Congo, and the other of his brutal and barbaric assassination. In his speech he criticized the Belgian King Baudouin and his people for the brutal and criminal practice of their colonialism of the Congo. The King in 1961 couldn't take the criticism of an African man who dared to tell the truth, and with the aid of the u.s. government ordered the assassination of Pres. Patrice Lumumba. That horrific image of his assassination, all tied up and with the papers of his speech stuffed in his mouth, has always reminded me of how barbaric and criminal colonizers are.

Of course i would love to experience freedom. But if i don't, i hope that someday you, Karina and your generations will get to enjoy freedom and to exercise to the fullest the inalienable right of self-determination. Hopefully your generations will transform Puerto Rico into the nation it has the potential of being - an edenic garden in the Caribbean for the enjoyment of Puerto Ricans and of all humanity.

With much love, my little world, and in RESISTENCIA Y LUCHA, Oscar López Rivera