

PUERTO RICO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

June 14, 1999

Hillary Rodham Clinton
The First Lady of the
United States of America

Dear Mrs. Rodham Clinton,

As a goodwill ambassador for the United States and a long friend of the cause of human rights, we urge you to support the liberation of 15 Puerto Rican women and men incarcerated in United States federal prisons for the past 19 years. These prisoners were convicted of seditious conspiracy for their activities in support of Puerto Rican independence. None of them was accused of nor convicted of causing physical harm to anyone. Yet, their disproportionate sentences go as high as 105 years in prison.

As you probably know, Puerto Rico is a politically divided country. Yet on the same token, we stand united by our deep-rooted values, traditions, profound sense of justice and selfless love for our country and our own. Although many do not expressly agree with the path chosen by these prisoners to advance the cause of independence for Puerto Rico, there is no doubt among Puerto Ricans that they were motivated by the purest and loftiest of political ideals and the love for their fatherland. Without a doubt, these people are not criminals.

We, hereby, respectfully present for your consideration the expressed support of the Puerto Rican people, be it living on the island or in the United States, for the liberation of our 15 political prisoners. Leaders of all political parties in Puerto Rico, including two living former governors of the island, most religious leaders and labor unions, the Puerto Rico Manufacturers Association, historians, artists, and Puerto Ricans from all walks of life have signed letters supporting the liberation of the 15 political prisoners, requesting President Clinton to pardon these prisoners, assuring their safe return to their homes, families and children.

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The Clinton Administration has expressed their support for the right of the people of Puerto Rico to their self-determination. The U.S. government has never provided the people of Puerto Rico with the opportunity to peacefully determine their own future by selecting from among viable options offered them by the federal government.

As you so rightfully stated during your December 10, 1997 remarks to the United Nations Economic and Social Council Chamber in New York City: "It is because every era has its blind spots that we must see our own unfinished business now while we stand on the threshold of a new millennium with ever greater urgency. We must rededicate ourselves to completing the circle of human rights once and for all. We must challenge ourselves to see more sharply, to hear more clearly, to feel more fully."

We strongly believe that among the few things which would better convey the love and respect for our people and our desire to achieve reconciliation and a peaceful resolution of our political contradictions is supporting the commuting of the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners sentences to time served, thereby bringing to an immediate end their excessively long periods of confinement.

The Puerto Rican community will stand behind your support to this cause. May God guide your actions.

If you need further information about the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners your office can reach me at: telephone (787) 725-1463/fax (787) 723-9829.

Sincerely

Luis Nieves Falcon
Prof. Luis Nieves Falcon
Coordinator