

Talking points about Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Oscar López Rivera

- 1) Oscar López Rivera, arrested in 1981, is serving a sentence of 70 years for seditious conspiracy, directly related to his commitment to the independence of Puerto Rico. He was not accused or convicted of causing harm or taking a life.
- 2) His projected release date is in 2023, when he will be 79 years old. Having served 29 years behind bars, including over 12 years in torturous conditions of total isolation and sensory deprivation, this 67 year old man is among the longest held political prisoners in the history of Puerto Rico and in the world.
- 3) A decorated Viet Nam veteran, Oscar worked as a community organizer in Chicago, for better housing, education, employment, and living conditions for Puerto Ricans and Latinos, helping to found institutions which are thriving today, including the Pedro Albizu Campos Alternative High School, in the heart of Chicago's Puerto Rican community.
- 4) In 1999, President Clinton commuted the sentences of eleven Puerto Rican political prisoners arrested in the 1980's, after they served from 16 to 20 years, as he determined their sentences were disproportionately lengthy. Carlos Alberto Torres, not included in the commutation, was released on parole in July of 2010 after serving 30 years;
- 5) President Clinton offered to commute Oscar's sentence, on the condition that he serve an additional ten years of clear conduct in prison before being eligible for release. Oscar felt he could not accept the president's offer, as the offer did not include all the Puerto Rican political prisoners, and since he knew, from his extensive experience at the hands of his jailers, that if he accepted they would never allow him to successfully complete the conditions.
- 6) If Oscar had accepted the president's offer, he would have been released in September of 2009.
- 7) The conditions of President Clinton's 1999 offer to commute Oscar's sentence— that he serve an additional ten years of clear conduct in prison— have been fulfilled.
- 8) His daughter Clarisa and granddaughter Karina, as well as his brothers and sisters and extended family, have asked him to come home. Their request is fueled by the recent death of Oscar's sister Clara, after a long illness during which prison officials refused to grant him a furlough to visit her bedside.
- 9) Civic, religious, political and community leaders in the U.S. and Puerto Rico have also asked him to come home. Their request is fueled by the injustice of his lengthy sentence, and the irrationality of his continuing imprisonment.

10) Of all the Puerto Rican political prisoners convicted in the early 1980's, only Oscar remains in prison, and some of those released in the 1999 commutations had longer sentences;

11) During Eric Holder's 2009 confirmation hearings to be Attorney General of the United States, he defended President Clinton's 1999 decision to commute the sentences of the Puerto Rican political prisoners, calling it a reasonable decision, and recognizing the wide support for their release;

12) Like all the Puerto Rican political prisoners released, Oscar has renounced the use of violence.

13) All the Puerto Rican political prisoners released in the 1999 commutations are living successful lives, fully integrated into civil society.

14) Oscar continues to enjoy wide support, including Puerto Rican civil society: the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Bar Association, former governors, virtually every religious denomination, labor unions, environmentalists, academics, community activists, human rights activists, and celebrities. Similarly, in the United States he enjoys the support of Latino and Puerto Rican communities, including elected officials, religious leaders, community and civic leaders, as well as people in general.

For more information: www.boricuahumanrights.org (English) and www.presopoliticospuertorriquenos.org (Spanish).

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