

Escritos Macheteros by Filiberto Ojeda Ríos

**Translator's Note:** *We have italicized all uses of Our America (Nuestra América) which is used to refer to the dream of a united America put forward by Latin American revolutionaries From Jose Martí to Filiberto Ojeda Ríos. We have similarly italicized Gran Patria (The Great Homeland) which also refers to a united Latin American homeland. Finally, The Confederation of the Antilles and the Antillean Federation are used interchangeably in the text.*

## Puerto Rico, Las Antillas, Nuestra América Toda

*Translated by: The Diaspora Pa'lante Collective*

*To José Ferrer Canales. With the greatest thanks and still greater admiration and affection.*

Puerto Ricans, we are *antillanos*. We are *caribeños*. We are *latinoamericanos*. We are children of *Our America*. Puerto Ricans, we share with numerous nations of the Caribbean and South America a common history. In our historical tradition of struggle and Latin American integration, our generous solidarity towards our Caribbean and Latin American brothers, who have demanded it from us, is relevant. That is not surprising. The root of that solidarity lies in the interwoven history, of the American continent, which we forged as a nation coming from the same cultural origins, ethnic integration, and common language; we have shared in suffering and poverty as people subjected to colonialist exploiters or imperialists, as many from Europe as from the rapacious north. The effects of Spanish colonialism that harmed all the nations of *Our America* have multiplied for Puerto Ricans under the aggressions that our people have suffered at the hands of, not only the Spanish metropole but still worse, the North American imperialist colonizers.

The intertwining of that story, like all dialectical processes part of that inexorable physical-philosophic law also applicable to all social and political acts, the law of cause and effect, is particularly evident in what has been the formation and struggle of all the people of *Our America* and of the world, starting with the indigenous insurgents like Agüeybaná the brave, Guaicaipuro, Caonabo, Hatuey, Túpac Amaru, and others, so numerous that it is not possible to detail, and continuing with Simón Bolívar, Antonio Valero, Antonio José de Sucre, Bernardo O'Higgins, José de San Martín, Miguel Hidalgo, Francisco Morazán, José Martí, Ramón Emeterio Betances, Gregorio Luperón, Juan Pablo Duarte, Augusto César Sandino, Pedro Albizu Campos, Juan Antonio Corretjer, José Carlos Mariátegui, Fidel Castro, Camilo Torres Restrepo y Hugo Chávez, to mention only a few, who have been, in their particular historical moment, representatives of an endless historical chain of struggles generated through the people. All of those mentioned above have reflected an intense humanitarian spirit and an unalterable dedication for the sake of achieving justice and equality for all.

The dedication of each one of these representatives of humanity has been due to a spiritual intuition emanating from a profound sensibility, through a privileged intellect without premeditation or personal interest, driven through revolutionary roads, have made history

precisely because it has been to understand the needs of the people in each historical period. They have represented the struggles and anxieties of humanity, in its march towards the construction of a world where inequalities and injustices do not exist, where relations, socioeconomic systems, and politics orient in the direction of forging that world. They have contributed to and achieved changes, and although they seem like small battles –they never are– have always moved in that revolutionary direction.

Equally, by the nature of what they have represented in their respective historical periods, all have been part of the inevitable process generated and led by humanity to overcome the systems of exploitation of man by man, imposed over the centuries by the sinister forces of egoism; of that world of “owners” that has generated brutal economic systems founded in private property over the means of production, passing from one to another according to the forces of revolutionary demands, resolving some, and always establishing a more just and superior system departing from the defeated systems of exploitation. So they went on, one after the other, the feudal systems over classical slavery, and capital over the feudal lords.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels; brilliant investigators of everything related to the dialectic of economic systems that in their time generated social relations at the service of each system of exploitation. Marx and Engels were scientists that investigated the roots of the capitalist system and its irreconcilable antagonistic contradictions and from whose bosoms are generated, besides its elements of disintegration, the new socioeconomic formulas that will ultimately replace it. These two geniuses, philosophers, economists, and revolutionary ideologues, made formulations clearly defined as socialist, they placed in the hands of the working class that has been deprived by capitalism of the means of production, of any development of new economic norms, and of social relations oriented towards the creation of systems for social equality. These are the substitute systems for those that, as in the case of capitalism, reach their evolutionary peak of development and become a threat to the progress of humanity, generating the contradictions and conditions for the establishment of a better system which is socialism. Marx and Engels also pointed out how the historically exploited become heirs of the new theories and formulation oriented towards guaranteeing the fundamental human rights of all people, beginning with the right to health, food, education, decent housing, work, and in the end, all those elements that bring true human contentment to the rights of the people.

In *Our America*, since time immemorial, a close bond of solidarity has existed between forces involved in advancing the resistance struggles and the emancipators of the continent before and after the creation of Latin American nations, as well as during all the historical periods since the European invasion and conquest starting at the end of the fifteenth century. Those struggles have formed part of a millennial process of human overcoming; of the constant search for the exploited and the dispossessed to achieve conquests vindicating those rights driven for the sake of improving the quality of life and it is extended to each and every human being. These have been social struggles that very well could be identified as “socialist”, although they were not given that label.

We venture to affirm that the history of humanity has been determined by the efforts of the exploited sectors and the dispossessed to overcome the inherent criminality of those who have tried to appropriate the fruit of their work turning it into a source of enrichment for their own benefit. So the slave system of exploitation, due to its anti-human and criminal nature, engenders its own self-destructive bases that put an end to their mode of production and creates the conditions for the establishment of the feudal system. This, in turn, by following the struggles of artisans to improve their condition and against the impositions and regulations imposed by the feudal monarchies, created the bases of capitalism whose norm is exploitation, with the passing of the centuries and with constant technological advances, exploitative systems become much more sophisticated and in turn more contradictory. Capitalism does not destroy exploitation nor injustice. In the capitalist system, private ownership over the means of production is carried out with even greater rigor; the sources of exploitation are amplified worldwide and generate irreconcilably antagonistic contradictions in social and productive relations, deepening inequality and misery for the population and for humanity.

### **Bolívar and Socialism**

We can assert that the revolutionary process carried out by Simón Bolívar since the beginning of the 19th century, enters, for its free and independent nature; for its projections of equality; for its concepts of giving importance to education for all the components of the people; for its interest in guaranteeing food for all; for its unifying projections of freedom for all Latin American and Caribbean peoples; as an integral part of those bottom-up processes oriented towards the conquest of social justice for humanity. *All those struggles, although they have not been identified in this way, have constituted, from the perspective that we expose here, an ascending step towards socialism.* In turn, Bolívar fought on all fronts against what is retrograde and divisive for the people who began to fall under the clutches of the US capitalist system. Those were the years in which the North American nation was becoming an imperialist power, whose aim was to establish bases for military and economic control over all the Americas. That was the process developed by the strongest to subdue and exploit the weakest thus guaranteeing the supremacy of the capitalist system and its cult of private property with all that this means for inequity, hunger, suffering, and death for the great dispossessed majority.

One of the most important processes initiated by the intense Bolivarian struggles was the active solidarity generated by all the Latin American and Caribbean peoples around that revolutionary movement. The humanitarian values of liberation driven by General Simón Bolívar –before the insidious desire for power took possession of some of the important soldiers under his command – were the values that penetrated the consciences of the sanest human beings who made up part of the Bolivarian army. The two centuries that have passed and that, have likewise, cemented the figure of Simón Bolívar in the consciences of fighters from all the peoples of *Our America*, they demonstrate his greatness and the scope of his work. Bolívar has been a source of inspiration for all generations of revolutionaries as well as for the best poets, painters, and singers of the Latin American nations who have given continuity to his thought through the centuries, naturally, including our Puerto Rico, which has been prolific in exalting his figure.

The liberation campaigns carried out by Bolívar generated intense solidarity, nothing can so clearly demonstrate that solidarity, as the process of the liberation struggle that was growing larger and more rebellions in the vast majority of nations in *Our America* since the end of the 18th century, until it became a solid movement organized by Bolívar and numerous patriots identified with the cause of independence on their minds. That cause of liberation touched the hearts of all those human beings attached to the great human truth, with vision and detachment, and who, having been born in what were already geographically and politically defined territories, presented the historical importance of, at the least, sowing the seeds of a Latin America and the Caribbean on the road towards their conversion into a great nation unified by an ideal of freedom and social justice. Bolívar was the great strategist of that ideal.

Although the Bolivarian project had as its central objectives the achievement of independence, and development of Latin American unity, its objectives of social justice were clearly demarcated in what were his *pronouncements of Angostura* as well as *the Letter of Jamaica* and other documents of fundamental strategic importance that exposed, as part of his main objectives, the unification of all the Latin American and Caribbean nations and their conversion into the ***Patria Grande***. In this way, the Liberator was also the Unifier. In the words of our beloved Eugenio María de Hostos: "The citizen of America", referring to the meaning of [Bolívars] victory at Ayacucho:

Ayacucho is, then, more than a glory of these peoples, more than a service rendered to progress, more than a fact resulting from other facts, more than a conquered right, more than a promise made to history and to the contemporaries that the victors on the battlefield were civilization against quietism, justice against force, liberty against tyranny, the republic against monarchy; Ayacucho is a commitment made by all of America that ceased to be Spanish on that day.<sup>19</sup>

The Bolivarian foundations regarding social justice provided great hopes and aspirations in the profoundly progressive forces of all the Latin American and Caribbean peoples whose need for liberation were consonant with those ideals. Bolívar's ideas were capable of capturing the creative and revolutionary imagination of the most outstanding human beings of those times. These tendencies were to constitute the inspiration for the projects for the unity of *Our America* later adopted by Martí, Betances, and many others at the end of the 19th century, as well as by Fidel Castro and Hugo Rafael Chávez and all of us who share these ideals today. The Bolivarian theories, both political and social, passed down from generation to generation as a line of strategic thought of struggle based on knowledge and the deepening of our history, are comparable to those that are now expressed by current revolutionaries categorized under the name of socialism.

It is not about a simplified or dogmatic socialism, but of the application of the Marxist methodology for the establishment of revolutionary projects, which are nothing other than the well-being of the people, the true equality of rights, and everything included in the concept of

social justice, naturally, starting from the *antagonistic contradictions* that exist in every socioeconomic system as described by Karl Marx.

These contradictions, when studied with scientific depth, allow us to be in a position to establish a solid analysis of reality, reach conclusions with greater objectivity, and establish strategies and tactics of struggle whose content is oriented towards the reorganization of the system of production and ownership and the distribution of goods produced by working class society. To act for social welfare and against the exploitation of man by man, one acts for socialism. That is largely what the Bolivarian Revolution is about.

Over the years the followers of Bolívar's ideology could be counted in the thousands. However, we can categorically affirm that there has not only been a single patriotic leader in the Puerto Ricans' struggle for independence throughout all the decades that have followed the Bolivarian epic and preceded the present moment, just like the most important poets and painters of past and present generations, for whom Bolívar has been a source of inspiration, perhaps with the same depth that it has been in his country of origin: Venezuela. The profoundly Bolivarian contribution of Puerto Ricans, beginning with General Antonio Valero to the present, has been a constant in the historical work of all Puerto Rican fighters. The paradigms of the struggle for the independence and freedom of the Puerto Rican people, if we place them generationally in our history of struggle, have been the following: General Antonio Valero was born in Fajardo, Puerto Rico in the year 1790 and deceased in 1863; the brothers Andrés and Juan Vizcarrondo, who fought for our independence from 1835 to the late 1860s, and who also operated from Venezuela; Ramón Emeterio Betances, Segundo Ruiz Belvis and Eugenio María de Hostos, who fought from the 1860s until the end of their days. Ruiz Belvis died mysteriously in Chile in 1867, Betances died in 1898 and Hostos in 1903; José de Diego, who held the independence leadership during the first two decades of the 20th century, until his death in 1918; Pedro Albizu Campos, a profoundly relevant leader who led the patriotic struggle from the late 1920s until after the nationalist insurrection, the attack on the Blair House and the attack on the United States Congress in the 1950s, who died in 1965; Juan Antonio Corretjer, socialist revolutionary, internationally recognized poet and honorary commander of the *Ejército Popular Boricua* (Los Macheteros) , who led them from the 1960s until his death in 1985; and finally, the *Ejército Popular Boricua*, current follower, among others, of the ideas expressed by all our revolutionary patriots.

It is for the purpose of establishing the transcendence of these great Puerto Ricans, that we will expound what the liberatory Bolivarian ideas of each were during all the decades of struggle forging our historic tradition, as well as to expound the theory of the *Ejército Popular Boricua* (Los Macheteros).

### **General Antonio Valero (1790-1863)**

Our Antonio Valero was, one of the liberators of Mexico and Peru, as well as one of the founders of the Republic of Venezuela. Among his appointments are the following: Commander-in-Chief of the 2nd Division of the Colombian Army sent to Peru to assist Bolívar; Bolívar appointed him Chief of Staff of the besieging lines of Callao; Chief of Staff of the Colombian Army; military commander of the valleys of Aragua; military governor of Puerto Cabello; commander of arms of the province of Caracas and Minister of War and Navy of Venezuela. Throughout his existence, he was one of the most faithful generals at the service of the Bolivarian cause. Above all, in addition to having been an effective general on the battlefield, he was also an immovable pillar of support for General Bolívar during an important part of his epic: through the greatness of his victories, as well as during the difficult moments at the end of his life, which subjected him to the worst vicissitudes and ignominious attacks so well described by Gabriel García Márquez in his masterly work "The General in his Labyrinth". Even though there were moments in which, due to insidiousness and envy, unjust accusations were made against our general, the truth prevailed and he did not waver in his ideological fidelity to Bolívar, until the day of his death.

His dedication, performance and heroic actions in battle earned him decorations such as the Liberator medal, the medal to the besiegers of Callao and the honorable designation of a space in the National Pantheon of Caracas, where the remains of the Liberator and the heroes of the great unifying war of the *Gran Patria* of Venezuela. He died in exile, in Bogotá, waiting to return to his beloved lands in the state of Aragua where his family anxiously waited for him. His remains have never been located to be transferred to the National Pantheon where, for the honor of Puerto Ricans, he must rest.

He was the first Puerto Rican liberation hero who, in addition to fight alongside Bolívar, did everything in his power to achieve the independence of Puerto Rico. Valero meets with Bolívar in 1823 to request the liberation of Puerto Rico, which was inherently linked to that of Cuba, so much so that it is with a group of Cubans that Valero goes to Bolívar. Valero prepares his plan for the independence of Puerto Rico, which consisted of a political part and a military part. In the political part he establishes that the state of Borinquen will be constituted as a dependent of the Republic of Colombia. Had Bolívar lived a few more years, we have no doubt that he would have achieved it [independence for Puerto Rico]. That seed of deep inspiration for all Puerto Ricans has continued to germinate during all the periods of convulsion for liberation generated by our patriotic people throughout its history.

Valeros continuation of thought for the liberation of Puerto Rico, which included the participation of María de las Mercedes Barbudo on Puerto Rican soil, in whose residence conspiratorial meetings were held in favor of the struggle for liberation and unity unleashed by Bolívar. The continued struggle for liberation came to life a few decades later with the brothers Andres and Juan Vizcarrondo. They again raised the flag of independence during the decades of the thirties

and forties in the 19th century, following the thought of the Liberator and of our people regarding the struggle for the independence of the Puerto Rican people. That liberation struggle, both *bolivariana* and *valeriana*, has been passed on to all Puerto Rican revolutionary patriots generation after generation up to the present, first to the Vizcarrondo brothers, then to Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances, who became the Father of the Puerto Rican Homeland, to Eugenio María de Hostos, and thus historically continued by José de Diego, Pedro Albizu Campos and Juan Antonio Corretjer. Today, Puerto Ricans have numerous sons and daughters who continue this historical tradition of struggle, preventing *Betancino* thought from being destroyed by reformist projects. In our history, even from the origins of our liberation struggle, the reformist tendency has constituted a destructive impediment to that traditional and imperious need for struggle, framed by ideological values that constitute the salvation of our homeland and the conquest of our independence, sovereignty and rights as Latin Americans.

### **Andrés Salvador y Juan Eugenio Vizcarrondo (1804-1897)**

During the second half of the decade of 1830, the Spanish courts deprived Puerto Ricans of some beneficial reforms achieved from the historic struggles that had roots in the war for emancipation under Bolívar's command. These were changes that took place in Spain itself that, in addition to struggling for decades due to the internal contradictions, also confronted liberation struggles generated in their American colonies. After getting rid of these reforms and re-imposing colonial standards of mass exploitation and the absence of freedoms, the brothers and military officers Andrés Salvador y Juan Vizcarrondo Ortiz de Zarate, along with Buenaventura Valentín Quiñones, counting on "the support of numerous officers and soldiers of the regiment of Grenada," and under the ideological influence of the Bolivarian and Valerian struggles that were in a process of spreading all throughout of *Our America*, launched what was called "The Conspiracy of the military." The most important scientists of our history, such as our great historian Lidio Cruz Monclova, consider the purpose of this uprising absolutely separatist. Although this effort failed due to a betrayal, the tendency was disseminated throughout many regions of our territory [Puerto Rico].

Warned of the betrayal, the Vizcarrondo brothers were able to escape, unlike Buenaventura Quiñones and a group of officers, sergeants, and soldiers, who were imprisoned. Some were subjected to the capital punishment of the *garrote*, others were shot, and many were incarcerated. Buenaventura Quiñones was murdered in his cell in the Morro Castle; his jailers later tried to make it seem that he had committed suicide, just as the Yankee colonialists did with our current martyr, Ángel Rodríguez Cristóbal.

The link of continued historic relevance is expressed when Ramón Emeterio Betances refers to Andrés Vizcarrondo as "the first of the precursors" and in another occasion as "the venerable dean of the republicans". This link between revolutionary and liberatory generations is fully established when, in 1865, the existing separatist boards in almost all the towns of the island entrusted Andrés Vizcarrondo with the organization of a liberation expedition that would leave from Venezuela. This expedition was not carried out due to the enormous repression unleashed after the ill-fated liberation attempt in Lares, on September 23, 1868.

## **Ramón Emeterio Betances y Alacán (1827-1898)**

Ramón Emeterio Betances was an integral and accomplished revolutionary patriot. His patriotic trajectory can be traced from the 1840's until his death in 1898. The great Puerto Rican historian, Dr. Félix Ojeda, whose life has been devoted almost entirely to doing justice to Dr. Betances, tells us that: "The project aimed at linking the Caribbean islands in a common course [The Confederation of the Antilles], outlined by Dr. Betances between 1848 and 1898, has deep roots in the Bolivarian era ". There are references that indicate that during the intense struggles of the February Revolution of 1848 [The French Revolution], Betances was a medical student at the University of Paris. The struggles that were generated not only in Paris, but also in various European capitals as a consequence of the immense contradictions produced by the Industrial Revolution motivated Betances' participation and solidarity. Similarly, the catastrophic declines in agricultural harvests that took place at the beginning of that decade throughout Europe created subhuman conditions for all workers, generating very intense struggles. These struggles counted on the theoretical and practical participation of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and on the communes completely generated by their social (working class) content. Betances, as a student, participated in these struggles. The powerful formative influence developed in Betances through those social and revolutionary struggles guided along socialist and communist lines was permanent in his life. Several years after the proclamation of the Second French Republic on February 24, 1848, Betances exclaimed: "I am also an old soldier of the French Republic. In 1848 I did my duty. When it comes to freedom, all peoples stand in solidarity... ".<sup>25</sup>

Betances returned to our homeland in 1856 and immediately dedicated himself to conspiratorial, humanitarian, and abolitionist activities. Which is why he was expelled from his beloved island to the Dominican Republic where he put his professional knowledge at the service of that brother nation starting in 1858. At that time the Dominican people, having lost their sovereignty at the hands of the Spanish colonialists, restarted the struggle that is known in the history of the Dominican Republic as the War of the Restoration. Betances fully supported these patriotic efforts and for this reason he was expelled again, adopting Venezuela as his residence for five months to return again to the Dominican Republic, when the people triumphed over the colonialist forces of Spain.

Upon returning to our homeland he founded the Yagüez Masonic Lodge, establishing a solid revolutionary base oriented towards the national organization of what would become known as *El Grito de Lares*, on September 23, 1868. This is the date that marks the consolidation of our nation, consecrating Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances before the world as the Father of the Puerto Rican Homeland. In Lares, one can perceive a great example of Latin American integration with the participation of the Rojas Lizardo brothers whom were Venezuelan by birth but Puerto Rican by adoption. Manuel Rojas was the commander in chief of the revolutionary forces, who together with his brother Miguel were members of the Centro Bravo Revolutionary Board number 2. Also outstanding are Puerto Rican women like Mariana Bracetti, better known as the



"Brazo de Oro" (Golden Arm), who helped contribute energy and talent to the revolutionary plans and is known as the embroiderer of the revolutionary<sup>26</sup> flag of Lares.

Betances was an extraordinary revolutionary. Perhaps nothing expresses it better than his own words: "The French Revolution of February 1848 is the Cuban Revolution of February 1895 descended from the same mother, and if they are not entirely sisters, they are at least first cousins".<sup>27</sup>

Our people did not manage to triumph militarily in the insurrection of September 23, 1868 (El Grito de Lares). Nevertheless, Betances continued the fierce struggle promoting material and economic support in favor of the Cuban people. He continued the revolutionary conspiracy to promote our struggle for the independence of the Homeland while creating on the island a clandestine organization that was supportive of the Cuban struggle. Like José Martí, he was the most outspoken promoter of *the Federation of the Antilles*, and of the linking of our people to *Our America*. The outstanding and beloved doctor José Ferrer Canales, an expert like few others on the lives of Betances, Martí, Hostos and our most beloved patriots of the past centuries, has written a wonderful work dedicated to Betances and José Martí establishing a parallelism on the thought and practice of both at the end of the 19th century. In it he quotes José Martí when he says:

I am already in danger every day of giving my life for my country and for my duty... to prevent in time, with the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading throughout the Antilles and from falling, with greater force, on our land of America.<sup>28</sup>

José Ferrer Canales adds:

[Jose] Martí's leitmotiv is "the free Antilles will save the independence of *our America*." The three major Antillean islands [Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, and Cuba] are, for him, "three cuts of the same bleeding heart", while Cuba and Puerto Rico are, "complementary islands... two lands that are a single joy and a single heart". Together we know, the islands of this archipelago will be saved. This Antilleanism is lived nobly and embodied passionately by Betances, who founded, like others, in Paris, the Latin American Union, and who published articles under the pseudonym "the Antillean".

Later he quotes Betances when he says that the [North] Americans are in the Dominican Republic:

You cannot imagine the pain that this fact causes me, so fatal for the realization of the great project of confederation, which would make all our islands a great nation...

The prominent historian Paul Estrade confirms the importance that the Dominican Republic was for Betances an integral part of the Confederation fo the Antilles. In a letter to his friend, the revolutionary Lola Rodríguez de Tió, Betances told her:

Saving the Dominican Republic from Yankee clutches and introducing an industry in the Antilles that will give them prosperity and consequently a desire for progress, are undertakings worthy of occupying a man's life.<sup>29</sup>

Bolivarian ideas were part of the immense political-ideological formation of Betances. His pronouncements were many, exalting not only the moral importance of the Liberator of America, but also the ideological and strategic importance of the thought and struggle of General Simón Bolívar, concepts applied in the formation of Puerto Rican revolutionaries. That formation had its foundation in the creation of the *Gran Patria* that Martí called *Our America*, which included in its bosom the Caribbean Antilles. Framed by these concepts, he developed the proposal for the creation of *the Federation of the Antilles*. José Martí, Antonio Maceo, Máximo Gómez, Gregorio Luperón, and many other prominent Caribbean patriots were linked to that idea and supported it, although it could not be carried out due to the intervention of the emerging Yankee imperialism in our islands. Parallel to Betances, the Puerto Rican Eugenio María de Hostos emerged as a great thinker, philosopher, and educator. Also an admirer of Bolivarian idea, and of total adherence to Betances' concepts oriented towards the creation of the Confederation of the Antilles.

### **Eugenio María de Hostos (1839-1903)**

Hostos was an extraordinary human being who carried in his heart not only the freedom of our homeland, but also an ideology of fertile feelings of revolutionary humanism. His tendencies and projections were focused on guaranteeing the human rights of all men and women, not only Puerto Ricans, but for all *Our America*. He devoted much of his life to establish educational systems in various sister nations and in a very particular way in the Dominican Republic, where his remains rest. Together with Betances and Martí, he professed the unification of the Antilles in a confederation and, naturally, the independence of Puerto Rico as a prelude to *the Confederation of the Antilles*.

Hostos was the most relevant and multifaceted Puerto Rican intellectual during the time in which he lived and received much recognition throughout Latin America. His work was very extensive and comprehensive. He was an excellent writer and literary critic - as was demonstrated through his well-known criticism of Shakespeare's Hamlet, like that of the Cuban poet Plácido. His ideological identification and his educational efforts were always oriented by his interest in extending education to the general population of all the nations in which his pedagogical services were required. For this he designed systems, wrote works such as "Moral Social", and dedicated many efforts in favor and defense of women's rights. His identification with the cause of independence for Puerto Rico constituted a lifelong objective and, above all, he was a great friend and admirer of José Martí and of Ramón Emeterio Betances, and together with them he promoted *the Federation of the Antilles*.

Hostos collaborated with numerous nations of *Our America* and was a profound expert of the thought and life of the general Simón Bolívar. As explained last January (2005) by Mr. Vinicio

Romero, the Consul of Venezuela in Puerto Rico, in an event commemorating the birth of Eugenio María de Hostos in the city of Mayagüez:

Hostos's idea of a federation is Bolivarian. In 1874 Hostos says: "The time for the federation of the Spanish provinces among themselves has arrived, the time for the federation of the Antilles with Spain has passed. Spain is Europe. The Antilles are America. America and Europe, within the common destiny of humanity, have different purposes.

And here comes a prediction: "Federate the Europeans to fulfill their (purpose); Let us Americans federate to fulfill ours"<sup>30</sup>

These ideas expressed by Hostos, as well as his wonderful writings referring to Bolívar, and in a very particular way his writing titled *Ayacucho*, make abundantly clear their adherence to what has been revolutionary thought that has been able to stay current through all generations of Puerto Rican patriots. The Bolivarian tradition was maintained several years later by the Puerto Rican patriot who kept the struggle and defense of our culture alive. An admirer of Betances and Hostos, like that of Bolívar, and was fundamental for keeping alive the idea of freedom for our homeland: José de Diego.

### **José de Diego (1866-1918)**

The *Antillanismo* of José de Diego, which is the extension of Bolivarian ideas in the Caribbean, has been expressed, not only in the political work of de Diego, but also in his poetic work. These expressions cannot be separated from what were his works of liberation, which, in turn, constituted a solid denunciatory voice of colonialism, especially in the period of his radicalization during the last years of his life. Given the weakness and fears of the Puerto Rican people, a weakness that was premeditatedly projected by the United States government, and given the lack of a leadership capable of organizing the people and raising their spirit of liberatory struggle, José de Diego, like Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón and others, assumed his role as ideological continuator of the patriotic struggle whose most fundamental predecessors were Betances and Hostos.

His leadership can be considered one of transition which was able to guarantee the survival of the conceptions of independence of the generation that preceded him. His class condition did not allow him to understand the nature of the inhuman exploitation to which Puerto Rican workers were subjected, but he did not lose sight of the importance of nationality, Puerto Rican identity, and the cultural values to which he dedicated his efforts, particularly during the last years of his existence. The danger of cultural genocide that the Yankee colonialists were trying to institutionalize was faced by José de Diego with his strong defense of Puerto Rican culture, our language, and our idiosyncratic values. He knew how to exercise a strong political leadership oriented by the ideas of Betances and Martí by promoting independence and Antillean unity. Given this, he took mass education as a fundamental line of defense for Puerto

Ricans. There is no better way to demonstrate those Bolivarian and *Betancino* values than in his own words, both poetically and politically:

Practical things, things of reality that will conceive and direct the magnificent dream of Martí, Gómez, Hostos, and Betances; radiation that lives in my eyes and I see everywhere... Cuban flag! Dominican labarum! Puerto Rican banner! Roses from the Antilles! Nascent constellation of the divine ideal!<sup>31</sup>

Politically, he gave continuity to that Antillean aspiration launched by Betances, Martí, Luperón, Gómez, and many other patriots of that transcendental generation which promoted these ideals of Latin American and Antillean unity, today resumed by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, as well as by the President of the Republic (*Martiano*) of Cuba, Fidel Castro Ruz. Already at the end of 1915, José de Diego, together with other Antilleans, founded *the Antillean Union*. Ferrer Canales cites the primary foundation of the first article:

The “Antillean Union” is constituted with the character of an institution favoring the strengthening of relations between the islands of the Caribbean Sea, mainly those united by their ethnic origin and the commonality of their histories, with the purpose of sustaining the full sovereignty and strengthening of the dignity, freedom, and happiness of the Antillean peoples in a broad horizon that reaches the ideal of their future political confederation.<sup>32</sup>

The revolutionary ideas started with Valero were consequently continued by the Vizcarrondo brothers, by Betances, Hostos, Ruiz Belvis, and many others. Jose de Diego kept alive the flag of Latin American unity and confederation and is the figure by which one of the greatest representative patriots of the liberatory yearnings of the Puerto Rican people, Pedro Albizu Campos, solidified the revolutionary thought of our heroes.

### **Pedro Albizu Campos (1891-1965)**

Pedro Albizu Campos is the greatest exponent of the struggle of Puerto Ricans for their freedom during the 20th century. He collected with deep fidelity the historical revolutionary thought, which is nothing other than the tradition of struggle of our people. Equally, he knew how to interpret and put into practice the legacy of the Bolivarian ideology that oriented Latin American and the Caribbean toward unity, ideas that were part of the patriotic objectives already translated into practice by the generations of Betances and Diego. We cannot affirm that Pedro Albizu Campos was a Marxist in his thinking. He wasn't. He was a revolutionary nationalist, whose patriotic trajectory, without a doubt, was clearly framed by Marxist and socialist tendencies, without proclaiming himself as such. He was not a Marxist, fundamentally, because of his deep religious faith which he conceived as part of the culture of resistance against the process of deculturation instigated by the invasion of 1898. He did not accept the atheistic tendencies propelled by the dogmatic Marxism that existed for many decades. However, within his liberatory practice contained revolutionary thought, and several of his main collaborators, such as Juan Antonio Corretjer, were people who clearly identified with Marxist ideology. Needless to say, he was

militantly supported by Marxists organized in the homeland and, above all, in the moments of greatest repression during the decades of the fifties and sixties of the last century, by the Communist Party USA.

Marxism, philosophically, rejects the existence of God. However, due to its own scientific essence to analyze socioeconomic and political systems, it cannot reject revolutionary processes and what liberation struggles mean for these processes. Struggles for social justice and equality constitute the goals of socialist norms; these are trends that have determined human progress, and are therefore, an integral part of the methodology of Marxist analysis. Can we deny the enormous importance for the struggles of social and liberatory justice of the peoples that have been framed by *Liberation Theology*, or by the struggles of the indigenous for their rights, such as the representation currently exemplified by the Bolivian revolutionary and socialist Evo Morales? To deny the importance of these aforementioned struggles would be anti-Marxist. Pedro Albizu Campos was a believer in revolutionary nationalism, and above all, totally committed to advancing social claims in favor of the workers and of the entire Puerto Rican people, beginning with his indisputable commitment to the independence of the homeland and to the unity of all Caribbean and Latin American nations, faithful to the historical tradition of all our heroes and martyrs.

Our most objective and respected historians agree on that historical valorization regarding Pedro Albizu Campos. The historian Marisa Rosado tells us:

For Albizu, what took priority over all other considerations was the preservation of qualities of excellence of the Puerto Rican personality in its many facets: I appreciate the deeds of men and women of worth, language, customs, unity of the people, education from the national point of view, anti-racism [sic], respect for women, the training of the country to govern itself and direct its destiny towards what is best for it in the development as a Caribbean and Latin American nation and the pride of being possessor of one of the most homogeneous cultures, in comparison, of course, with the Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>33</sup>

Likewise, she tells us:

Albizu exposed from his first steps in politics the thesis that the independence of Puerto Rico was a necessity of the anti-imperialist struggle of Ibero-America and the Antilles. He called for the study of the North American penetration into the continent manifested through military, economic, cultural, and religious intervention.<sup>34</sup>

Equally important are the ideas presented by the teacher José Manuel Torres Santiago, who has stood out for his important investigations related to the life of Albizu:

There is no doubt that the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist thinking of Albizu Campos is not only still alive in the current political conditions of Puerto Rico, but also in those of the Caribbean and Latin America. His anti-colonial and anti-imperialist denunciation was visionary... Hence, he also vehemently denounced the claims of the United States to "take possession of the Antilles, turn the Caribbean into a Yankee lake, and thus exert a strategy of influence on Mexico, Central, and

South America”, the politics of colonization and neo-colonization of the Latin American republics under the pretext of defending them from foreign aggression; and cultural penetration.<sup>35</sup>

On September 23, 1933, Pedro Albizu Campos very clearly laid out his strategic thinking on the struggle: to continue the ideas of Betances, Martí, Máximo Gómez, and Hostos, among others. His thought was based on the values and objectives established by Simón Bolívar in relation to Latin America, which he saw as a Great Nation and Great Homeland, or in the words of President Hugo Chávez Frias today.<sup>36</sup> For Albizu Campos, “Lares is the Bolivarian legacy of Ayacucho in the Antilles”.

Together with the duty and the right to pay homage to the martyrs of Lares, we have to pay homage to the memory of the Liberator. He thought of achieving with his sword forged by the people, the independence of Cuba and Puerto Rico... But then, the United States intervened, offering its fleet to Spain so that it retained its Antillean provinces. This is how the Yankee empire interrupted Bolívar’s plan for liberation.<sup>37</sup>

Albizu took up and updated not only the Bolivarian thought articulated by Betances, but also the ideas, conceptions, and practices of armed struggle that have shaped our tradition of liberatory struggle. History throughout the world had already shown that colonies do not achieve their freedom due to a non-existent “generosity” of the metropolises, but thanks to the most determined struggle generated by the peoples for the sake of the conquest of their usurped rights. Betances was never part of the conciliatory reformism that has done so much damage to the process of the liberatory struggle of Puerto Rico. On the contrary, he relentlessly combated this trend and when he died, he left with the patriotic and revolutionary reflection: “What is it with Puerto Ricans that they do not rebel?”

Puerto Rican revolutionary nationalism has given examples of beautiful heroism to the world. Men and women, under the banner of Albizu and following the postulates of patriotic struggle and social justice, acted with incomparable courage by directly attacking the monster’s lair. Rafael Cancel Miranda, Oscar Collazo, Andrés Figueroa Cordero, Irvin Flores, Lolita Lebrón, Griselio Torresola and hundreds of men and women offered their lives for the sake of those *Betancino* and *Albizuista* ideals, deepening that tradition of struggle and watering with their blood the germinated seed of all our revolutionaries, both of that glorious generation along with those of us who have continued along that appointed path. In this process of the glorious struggle of Puerto Ricans led by Pedro Albizu Campos, the immediate continuation of [the movement] emerged from it’s own ranks: Juan Antonio Corretjer.

### **Juan Antonio Corretjer Montes (1908-1985)**

Juan Antonio Corretjer was an extraordinary human being: as a nationalist, he was a Bolivarian, as a Bolivarian, he was a socialist, as a socialist, he was a Marxist, as a Marxist, he was a revolutionary, and as a revolutionary, he was a poet. He was an ideologue and a teacher, an organizer for unity and of consistent practice, without opportunism, with irrefutable principles noble and profuse with love towards his people and towards all humanity.

His understanding of what revolutionary nationalism was took him to the military from a very young age in the ranks of the [Puerto Rican] Nationalist Party directed by Pedro Albizu Campos. His poetic work today reaches not only to Puerto Ricans, but to all of *Our America*. His political work still fills the hearts of all who knew him and we continue to share his dream. After the intense repression the Nationalist Party was subjected to during the 1930s to 1950s, and after the imprisonment and torture of Pedro Albizu Campos who himself was known in Puerto Rico as the Teacher; Juan Antonio began to develop the foundations for the creation of what was *the Puerto Rican Socialist League*.

The political culture of Juan Antonio goes hand in hand with his gigantic literary culture as well as with the arts. His human sensibility could be projected through his poetic and political sensibility, like a genuine revolutionary. His guidance, his orientation, his life, was always channeled by fixed ideas that were unbreakable in his soul, insurmountable in his conception that was always, although the most difficult to carry out, the most honest, direct, and courageous. He was incorruptible.

On May 22, 1935, after Albizu had sent Juan Antonio as a delegate to Cuba to manage support for the liberatory cause of nationalism and the Puerto Rican people, and because Corretjer had been arrested and imprisoned in the Castillo del Príncipe, Albizu wrote to the then President of the Republic of Cuba, Mr. Carlos Mendieta, requesting the release of the Puerto Rican patriot. When addressing Mendieta, who was actually a supporter of the dictator Fulgencio Batista, Albizu reminds him of the sacrifices of Puerto Ricans during the various wars carried out by the brother nation to achieve their independence:

The oath that united Martí and Hostos for eternity, Maceo and Rius Rivera, Estrada Palma and Betances, is about to be fulfilled by the Cubans who know that Puerto Rico paid with their slavery the price of Cuban independence. More than two thousand Puerto Ricans died on the battlefields of Cuba to found that republic. We know that Cubans want to validate that oath before their posterity and we have hastened to send before them a man who represents the inviolable bonds between the two Antillean nations.<sup>38</sup>

Without a doubt, the concept of Caribbean and Latin American unity continued without pause as a historical responsibility bequeathed to us by our tradition of liberation and revolution. Albizu sent Corretjer to Cuba to strengthen those ties and ensure that some promises that he considered indissoluble were fulfilled by those who had an obligation to do so. At that time, those who governed Cuba did not represent those commitments, but rather those who fought those who had already sold their souls to the northern monster. But Albizu was immersed in the commitment contracted and sealed with blood by Boricua patriots in the Cuban jungle. The most supportive Cubans of that time were, without a doubt, defined and committed socialists and Marxists. That opposition, made up of revolutionaries and intellectuals of enormous value, including Antonio Guiteras, Juan Marinello, Blas Roca, Pablo de la Torriente Brau, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, Nicolás Guillén, and dozens of Cuban revolutionaries who also loved Puerto Rico, supported Corretjer, fulfilling the commitment demanded by Pedro Albizu Campos. There [In Cuba] a highly progressive thought was consolidated in our Corretjer that led him towards

the definition of a revolutionary nationalism in opposition to chauvinistic and reactionary nationalism that characterizes the national bourgeoisies. Corretjer's *Albizuista* revolutionary nationalism is the nationalism of all Puerto Rican patriots today. It is the nationalism of Puerto Ricanness.

Throughout his life, Corretjer maintained the fundamental commitment to two aspects of the same struggle: national independence for the Puerto Rican nation, and the establishment of a social system based on justice, equality, and the means of production in the hands of those who produce, that is, an ideologically and structurally socialist political and social system.

But Corretjer, above all, was a human being of profound culture and knowledge of Marxist and revolutionary theory. As his practice has shown, his knowledge of history of our nation, of the Caribbean, and of *Our America*, were in all aspects of him, very deep. For this reason, he knew how to dialectically combine all the elements of the national reality and recognize the international framework in which our struggle takes place. With his deep sensitivity, he knew how to value the historical significance of Simón Bolívar, his ideological values and his political objectives of Latin American and Caribbean unity. Perhaps nothing demonstrates it with as much intellectual refinement as the following poetry:

**Time does not end**

A time that never ends.

150 years will become thousands of centuries.

And the steed will illuminate with its chirping sparks  
on the immemorial stone

the endless tomorrow will nourish the sun that does not set.

Freedom sprouts where it steps.

A thousand Orinocos will multiply by a thousand,

for millions and millions. They will break all

the fluvial computers. The waters  
will be smooth and clear polished by  
the incessant gallop

Like a soft ramp of foam and velvet  
the barbarian will be for his bold colt step

Santa Barbara rapids.

Everything will be new, shiny.

There will never be night because his eyes look.

America and the world will shine

because they reflect that glow  
that eternally speaks  
with delirious light

in romantic Chimborazo.

Ayacucho will be called Chipote.

Junín will be called Stalingrad.

Vietnam will be called Bolívar.

Under the emerald rider

The winged horse will fly from century to century,  
from Ayacucho to Ayacucho,



from Chipote to Chipote,  
from Junín to Junín,  
of Vietnam in Bolívar,  
of Bolívar in Bolívar.  
And new liberties will sprout like herbs  
wherever the prairie horse lays  
the magical sowing hooves of him.  
Because the people's time never ends.  
The town never ends.  
The brave town never ends.  
Because Ayacucho time never ends.  
If it ended, it would all end.  
We would have no sense of proportion.  
We would be very miserable.  
We would ignore that freedom grows and grows.  
Because there is infinite time.  
Winning time.  
Bolívars time that does not end.<sup>39</sup>

The legacy of Juan Antonio Corretjer, his revolutionary harmonization between nation, homeland, people, social justice, and socialism, is as great as his poetry is. His heart was people, humanity. Between the revolutionary Juan Antonio and the poet Juan Antonio there is no contradiction or priority; both marched parallel towards the conquest of the symbiotic ideal that was for him: a free and sovereign homeland, a just and socialist homeland. They complemented each other.

Juan Antonio developed an intense ideological struggle to face the reformist tendencies applied by some pro-independence sectors, as well as those who participated in the colonial electoral process which he considered to be playing the game of the enemies of our people. He claimed it as a legitimate right for revolutionaries to resort to armed struggle as means to achieve our independence. He was an active Bolivarian. In addition to his poetic works, nothing was better than his political conceptions and, above all, his analysis and historical interpretations. If anything reflects this Bolivarian trend that was expressed in dozens of documents and poems, are the words that he wrote in 1963, referring to Albizu Campos:

Four fundamental points form the basis of the Antillean orientation of Puerto Rican independence leader Pedro Albizu Campos: (1) Independence of Puerto Rico; (2) Antillean Confederation; (3) Latin American Union; (4) Spiritual Hegemony of Latin American nations. It is his work on the second point that we address in this note. On the eve of his trip through the Antilles in 1927, Albizu Campos says to Luis Antonio Miranda: 'The Antillean archipelago occupies a privileged position in world geography. It is essential to expel the United States from its territories and consolidate them under a confederation with sufficient naval power to resist any revenge. Because I have no doubt about the determination that any war (in the Caribbean) would have. This will not end until North American imperialism is rendered impotent.'

These words are written by Juan Antonio shortly before the death of our Albizu. They not only reflect Albizu's Bolivarian thought, but also his deep personal conviction, which he reinforced through his revolutionary practice and passed on to the revolutionary generations who, like the Macheteros, take up the banner of all these revolutionary ideas and execute them consistently for the sake of our freedom, social justice, and equality.

To Juan Antonio, we bestowed the honorary rank of Commander of the Macheteros upon him, as the General Secretary of the Puerto Rican Socialist League, an organization that has always been closely linked to the Popular Boricua Army — the Macheteros. We have felt deeply honored by Juan Antonio's publicly expressed acceptance upon receiving our appointment.

### **Ejército Popular Boricua-Macheteros (1970-Present)**

Since the moment Colonel Hugo Chávez Frías was elected as the President of the Venezuelan government in 1998, and began his clear policy of Latin American and Caribbean integration, new spaces and hopes have opened up for all our nations and peoples, as well as for those of us in Puerto Rico who still fight for a free homeland and a Caribbean and Latin American brotherhood faithful to the thoughts of our most prominent revolutionary leaders. The dream of Betances, Martí, and many other Caribbean heroes, however, must be preceded by what is a precise and essential conquest in order to move in that direction: the independence of the Puerto Rican nation and the exercise of full sovereignty by the Boricua people over their own destiny.

The Popular Army of Puerto Rico – the Macheteros, for decades, have fought for the independence of our homeland, faithfully following that tradition of struggle which, as we have expressed, is the legacy and historical continuity of all the great Puerto Rican revolutionaries who have preceded us for centuries. Yankee colonialism, the complete absence of sovereignty, and the existence of a capital-driven bourgeoisie and underprivileged population that is dependent on the colonial metropolises constitute the basic elements that Puerto Ricans must defeat. The objective of implementing colonial policies regarding the Puerto Rican national economy, education, and control over all media have allowed them, in addition to criminally seizing everything our people are capable of producing, to apply destructive policies that undermine any sense of Puerto Rican identity. Moreover, they have particularly affected the psyche of Puerto Ricans, creating individual and collective insecurity within our population. If any nation in the world could serve as proof of Frantz Fanon's theories, it is our people. Fanon said:

The colonizer makes history and knows what he does. And as he constantly refers to the history of the metropolises, it clearly indicates that he is here as an extension of that metropole. The history he writes is not, therefore, the history of the country he dispossesses, but the history of his own nation as it pillages, violates, and starves. The immobility to which the colonized is condemned can only be challenged when the colonized decides to put an end to the history of colonization, to the history of plunder, in order to bring forth the history of the nation, the history of decolonization.<sup>41</sup>

Fanon's explanations are aimed at demonstrating the violence of the colonized as a liberating force, a violence that has sometimes been carried out without contemplation or remorse by colonized peoples who have expressed themselves in Africa and America. The North American colonialist imperialism, through its application of genocidal and destructive policies directed towards the personality of Puerto Rican people, has managed to create a Puerto Rican with a profound dose of repressed violence, the eruption of which, once it occurs, would be completely uncontrollable.

Our people are no different from any other people in the world. The reaction of other peoples, if subjected to similar conditions to ours, would be the same as that demonstrated by Puerto Ricans. However, the conditions imposed by Yankee colonialists in Puerto Rico have been very different from the experiences of exploitation in most colonial nations. In our country, the objective has been, on one hand, to achieve the disappearance of resistance through the application of policies aimed at cultural genocide, which is synonymous with the destruction of the Puerto Rican people's identity, and on the other hand, to create a state of total economic and psychological dependence in order to survive given the circumstances.

The beginning of this genocidal policy occurred when the American colonialists demonstrated their enormous military power, implementing a purely terrorist policy aimed at the brutal intimidation of our population. It was an invasion carried out against a people who already had deeply rooted colonial tendencies in their consciousness, thanks to nearly four centuries of Spanish colonialism and all the sufferings inherent to peoples subjected to the barbarism of colonialism, particularly after the total elimination of the indigenous population.

All the policies imposed by the Yankees on our people by force followed this genocidal orientation. That is why, in addition to destroying the Puerto Rican economy, which aimed at achieving self-sufficiency for survival, and replacing it with a completely dependent economy controlled by Yankee capitalists, they did everything possible to destroy our cultural roots by imposing an education aimed at the elimination of the Spanish language and its replacement with English. They eliminated and hindered the teaching of our true history, which contained solid examples of libertarian orientation, and substituted it with the history of the United States, along with the forced and systematic introduction of customs and lifestyles belonging to the people of the United States. They implemented a policy of forced migration, starting from the early 20th century, which led thousands of Puerto Ricans not only to the mainland to perform the most arduous and poorly paid jobs but also to distant places like Hawai'i and the Philippines. They eliminated all the governing mechanisms that, with the autonomy achieved by Puerto Ricans shortly before their invasion, placed important aspects of the military administration of the country in Puerto Rican hands, in order to impose a colonial copy of the Yankee governmental mechanisms under the facade of democracy.

The constant terror executed through repressive policies whose purposes have been to hinder and eliminate any libertarian tendency of our nation and true social justice has been a constant from the very moment they invaded our land until the present. Implanting in the consciousness

and subconsciousness of Puerto Ricans the idea that without the Yankees, we would all starve to death is psychological terrorism deliberately planned and executed. Terrorism is instilling fear of being repressed and imprisoned for the mere act of possessing a Puerto Rican flag in your home. Terrorism is uprooting Puerto Ricans from their essence as human beings, from their history, from the brotherhood of those who, like you, share your geographic environment and common history. Terrorism is forcing children to study in a foreign language and, at the same time, humiliating those who reject this criminal trend. Terrorism is forcing Puerto Rican youth to fight in wars against innocent people who have done no harm to Puerto Ricans. Terrorism is controlling and deciding who can or cannot enter Puerto Rico, imposing a Federal Court over the local one, deciding who can establish a radio or television station, or press, and defining their content. Terrorism is turning our people into guinea pigs to experiment with medications whose effects are unknown, releasing chemical agents like Agent Orange in our mountains, only to use them against other defenseless nations. Terrorism is turning our island of Vieques into a training center for the Yankee Navy and using it as a shooting range without considering the well-being of our resident population.

The list of terrorist actions committed against our people is endless. All of them have had an extremely detrimental effect on the quality of life of Puerto Ricans, particularly in terms of psychological damage. That is why the number of Puerto Ricans suffering from some form of mental disorder or illness is among the highest in the world. However, none of the crimes committed against us have been able to dissuade our people from learning from a history that, in practical terms, has been disseminated almost clandestinely, as the authorities have made no efforts to ensure that our youth have full knowledge of our cultural heritage, of our tradition of struggle.

Hundreds of men and women, located in all social spheres and patriotic and libertarian organizations that have emerged in our nation throughout our existence as a people, have acted as disseminators of our true history, overshadowing the destructive efforts carried out by the colonialists as a policy. They may have been small organizations, and on numerous occasions, individuals who, at an individual level, have taken the responsibility to study and disseminate our true history and cultural heritage through their own efforts. Similarly, the studies and research conducted by the most prominent Puerto Rican intellectuals, consulting archives from numerous nations such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Venezuela, and Spain, have recorded many of the achievements of Puerto Ricans throughout the centuries and have been disseminated almost clandestinely to our population. That has been the way in which our people have been able to keep alive in memory the true history of our fighters and our people. It has not been the institutions of Spanish colonialism or those of the United States that have propagated our real history, but rather that patriotic intellectualism of Puerto Ricans that has ensured that these efforts are never lost and that, fundamentally, they serve to keep hope, conviction, nationality, our culture alive, and to spread what the enemy of our people is unable to defeat or eliminate: the national consciousness and personality of the Puerto Rican people.

The Bolivarian ideas, which are spreading with unstoppable force today, we have come to know through those individuals who have kept them alive. The Macheteros have taken up those

banners: the flag of freedom, independence, and total sovereignty for our people; the flag of the integration of the Antilles into a glorious Antillean Confederation; the idea of unity among all the nations of *Our America*, leading to the creation of the Great Homeland, which was Bolívar's dream and the dream of all committed Caribbean and Latin American heroes and martyrs.

The independence of the Puerto Rican nation represents a strategically important step in the process of total liberation and independence for all of *Our America*. A Puerto Rico subjected to brutal Yankee colonialism is nothing but a threat to the sovereignty of our sister nations due to their utilization of our territory. For the Yankee colonialists, Puerto Rico has been used as a military stronghold from which invasions and aggressions have been launched against the peoples of Central and South America. U.S. troops have departed from U.S. bases on Puerto Rican territory to attack our brothers in the Dominican Republic, as well as Cuba, Grenada, Nicaragua, Panama. They have used our territory to carry out sinister covert operations by the CIA against Venezuela, Colombia, and other sister nations. Our beloved Pedro Albizu Campos had already warned that as long as Puerto Rico remained a Yankee colony, Latin America could not be free.

The Ejército Popular Boricua (Popular Boricua Army) is nothing but a continuation of the Bolivarian inspiration transformed into a tradition of struggle by our distinguished patriots and revolutionaries. The United States government declared war on the Puerto Ricans on July 25, 1898, by bombarding, invading, and militarily occupying our national territory. They have turned our people into slaves, not only in terms of material production as wage laborers but also as slaves to their bloodthirsty policies of wars and occupation of distant lands whose peoples have not offended ours in any way, and they have forced our youth to serve in their forces of aggression. However, that historical tradition of struggle was already in development during the efforts for emancipation and against Spanish colonialism, a tradition that has continued to this day.

Bolívar is, for Puerto Ricans, a symbol of freedom; he represents Latin American unity and equality. He has been the guiding thread that has generated a historical tradition of struggle and freedom, linking us to the process of creating the Great Homeland.

The Macheteros will remain consistent with that tradition of struggle, with those Bolivarian principles of unity for *Our America*, which naturally includes our Antilles. We fight for a free and sovereign homeland and in favor of the Latin American unification propelled through the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), which will become a guarantee of economic integration and a just and equitable future for all our peoples. It is the Bolivarian dream, the dream of all freedom-loving Puerto Ricans. Let us remember the words spoken by Betances on the occasion of the inauguration of the Bolívar Library in Paris when he invited Latin Americans "to wage war on war in our countries, in the shadow of the venerable name of Bolívar, to establish forever the strongest solidarity among the South American nations."<sup>42</sup>