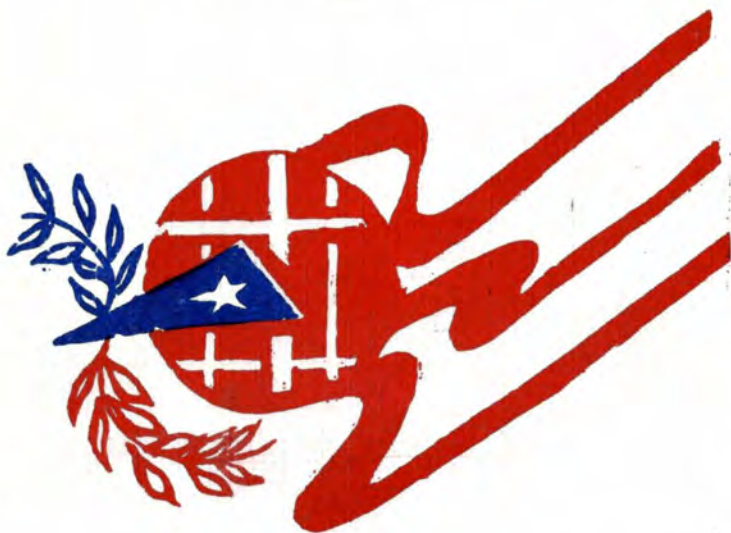


**CIVIC-RELIGIOUS
COMMITTEE
IN
SUPPORT**



**OF THE PUERTO RICAN
PRISONERS OF WAR**

**AND
AGAINST GRAND JURY REPRESSION**



The Civic Religious Committee wishes to express our thanks and appreciation to freedom fighter, Elizam Escobar for designing the cover illustration for this booklet.



Dear

As someone we know to support the right of nations to self-determination, we are writing to ask you to read the enclosed pamphlet, take one small action on behalf of self-determination and independence for Puerto Rico, and endorse the enclosed petition.

The petition is in support of Prisoner of War status for eleven men and women currently incarcerated in U.S. prisons. The eleven have asked to be treated as prisoners of war under international law because the actions with which they have been charged are part of the struggle for independence for Puerto Rico, not "criminal" actions. They have taken this stance, even though it has meant decades-long prison sentences and life imprisonment.

Your support is particularly important at this time. In the United Nations Special Session in August, 1982, the General Assembly will again hear the case of Puerto Rico. As a U.S. citizen, your endorsement of the petition will have special significance as the case is heard.

If you have other questions or need additional information, please contact us. Let us know also, of others who should receive this pamphlet and petition. Or make extra copies of the petition and gather endorsements from others you know.

Sincerely,

Rev. Michael Yasutake
Ms. Joan Nicklin 984-8233
Rev. Elli Elliott 987-0078
Rev. Jose A. Torres 384-8118 wk., 227-3121 home

INTRODUCTION

On April 4, 1980, eleven Puerto Rican men and women were taken prisoner in Evanston, Illinois. The media portrayed them as vicious and hardened "terrorists". But we of the Civic Committee have seen for ourselves another side of the story. Some of us have known individuals among the eleven as our professional colleagues, as humane and committed individuals in their everyday work. Others of us met them after their capture and have witnessed the stance they have taken before the U.S. courts and the treatment they have received.

These eleven people have stood before U.S. courts without making any defense, repeatedly asking to be treated as Prisoners of War. They have taken this stance of non-recognition of the courts at great personal cost to their own lives, allowing the courts to convict them of anything and to give them the maximum sentences. In spite of a lack of evidence against her, Haydee Beltran Torres stood before the court in New York accused of murder, facing potential death sentence, and she made no defense.

Is this intense commitment and strength an isolated "delusion" as the media would have us believe? If this is a "delusion", it is one which we, the United Nations, and many other international bodies support - the "delusion" that the people of the world have an inalienable right to self-determination and, if necessary, the right to fight for it.

But the media does not portray the other side of the story, which explains the intense and self-sacrificing commitment of these eleven people. The other side of the story is not the story of a few individuals. It is the story of Puerto Rico.



U.N. CONDEMNS COLONIAL STATUS OF PUERTO RICO

Several times, in increasingly strong language, the Decolonization Committee of the U.N. has affirmed the right of the Puerto Rican people to independence and self-determination, free of U.S. interference. In a 1979 report of the Committee approved by the General Assembly (129 for, 0 against, 6 abstentions), the U.N. reaffirmed its mandate to the U.S., calling for complete transfer of all powers to the Puerto Rican people without further delay. Special attention has been given to continuous repression and harassment against all organizations and individuals advocating independence. The case of Puerto Rico is under continuous study by the U.N., since a General Assembly vote in 1973 (4 for, 5 against, and 19 abstentions).

In its Special session in August, 1982, the U.N. General Assembly will once again hear the case of Puerto Rico.



United States troops invade Puerto Rico to "liberate" it from Spain.

WHY IS PUERTO RICO A COLONY OF THE U.S.?

Puerto Rico has been militarily occupied by U.S. armed forces since 1898. In that year, the U.S. army invaded and replaced the sovereign autonomous Puerto Rico, which had been established in 1897 as a result of the Charter of Autonomy. U.S. military presence is today as much an occupation as ever. The U.S. maintains nearly 100,000 military and paramilitary personnel on the island. Military bases occupy 13 percent of Puerto Rico's arable land. On the island of Vieques, once a prosperous farming and fishing community, 26,000 out of 33,000 acres are held by the U.S. Navy.

The U.S. currently maintains control over all the trade and diplomatic relations of Puerto Rico. All laws passed in Puerto Rico are subject to approval of the U.S. Congress. The Jones Act of 1917, imposed U.S. citizenship on Puerto Ricans, so that their young men could be drafted for the First World War. But in 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the protection of the U.S. Constitution did not apply to Puerto Ricans. Laws were also passed making it a crime even to advocate Puerto Rican independence. The U.S. has never allowed a referendum in Puerto Rico on which independence was an option.

Economic dependence on the U.S., and ownership by U.S. interests, has also replaced a once self-sufficient economy. First, a diversified agricultural economy was replaced with a one-crop industry and chemical plants are being installed. U.S. financial interests control and benefit from Puerto Rico's dependence. Over 80 percent of manufacturing, 60 percent of banking, and 90 percent of industrial exports are under U.S. control. 81 percent of those employed in Puerto Rico work for U.S. concerns. Puerto Rico now must import almost all its food from the U.S.

WHAT COLONIALISM MEANS FOR THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO

- * 40 percent of the work force is unemployed.
- * 1/3 of the population has been forced to migrate to the U.S. to survive. One in three Puerto Rican families in the U.S. lives below the poverty level.
- * 75 percent of the people in Puerto Rico must depend on Food Stamps for survival. 4 out of 10 Puerto Rican women of childbearing age have been sterilized in government sponsored programs. (Puerto Rican women were also made the objects of early research on birth control pills, before they were considered safe for U.S. women).
- * The highest suicide rate in the Western Hemisphere.

FOR THOSE WHO RESIST, COLONIALISM MEANS BRUTAL REPRESSION

For example:

- * October, 1935 - Colonial police gunned down four Nationalist Party leaders at a rally in Rio Piedras;

- * March, 1937 - Police operating under direct orders from the U.S. colonial governor opened fire machine guns on unarmed, peaceful demonstrators at what became known as the Ponce Massacre, leaving 21 dead and 150 wounded;
- * October, 1950 - To put down an uprising for independence, the U.S. Air Force strafed and bombed the people of Jayuya and Utuado. U.S. ranks patrolled the streets of Ponce and Mayaguez, and U.S. trained National Guardsmen attacked towns and villages with machine guns. Hundreds were shot, and 3,000 were imprisoned.
- * July 25, 1979 - Two Puerto Rican independentists, Arnaldo Dario Rosado and Carlos Soto Arrivi, led by an undercover agent to Monte Maravilla were assassinated by the colonial police who was waiting for them in ambush.
- * November 10, 1979 - Angel Rodriguez Cristobal, a leader in demonstrations against the U.S. Navy's total destruction of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, was hung in an isolation cell at Tallahassee Federal Prison. He was the first to take a stance as a Puerto Rican Prisoner of War, and was serving a six-month sentence.
- * July, 1980 - Luis Adorno Maldonado and Jorge Zayas Candal were found shot execution-style in Puerto Rico.

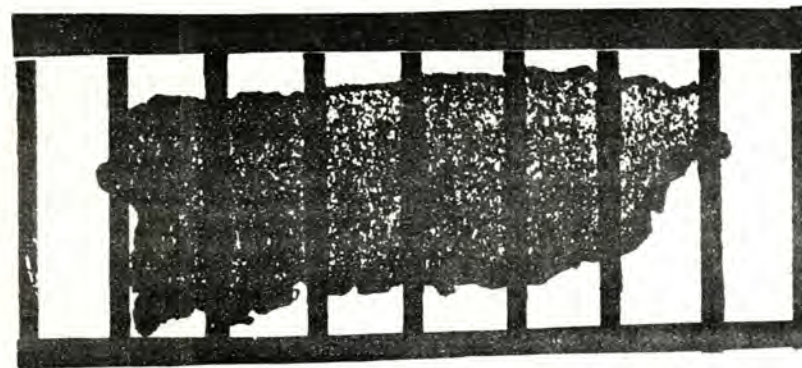
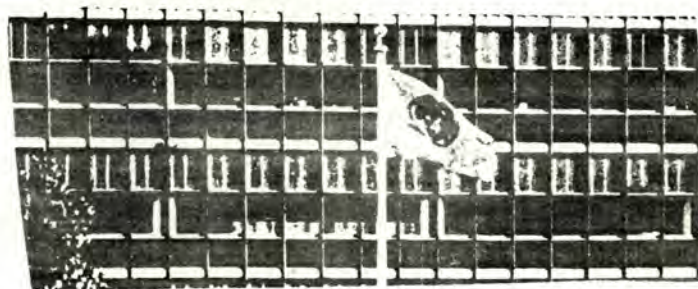
Files released by the FBI under lawsuits against political surveillance reveal every kind of deliberate harassment, infiltration, personal smear tactics, and disruption being used by government agencies against individuals and organizations working for Puerto Rican independence.



BASIS FOR CLAIM OF P.O.W. STATUS

Taking their stance as fighters for Puerto Rican independence, the eleven are asking to be treated as Prisoners of War, according to international law. They base their claim, in part, on the U.N. General Assembly's Resolution 33/24. On December 8, 1978, the General Assembly enacted this Resolution entitled "Importance of the Universal Realization of the Right of Peoples to Self-determination and of the Speedy Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People for the Effective Guarantee and Observance of Human Rights". It states: "The General Assembly...reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination and foreign occupation by all means available, particularly armed struggle".

The United Nations demands that all captured anti-colonial freedom fighters be treated as Prisoners of War, not as criminals. (The Additional Protocols of the Geneva Accords, adopted in 1977, which the United States was one of the few countries not to sign, also specifically expanded the Geneva Convention to protect anti-colonial freedom fighters, whether or not the colonial power recognizes the army and whether or not the armed combatants are in uniform). The United Nations General Assembly has also recognized that the country perpetuating colonialism has not right to imprison those who fight back. Resolution 33/122, entitled "Protection of Persons Detained as a Result of Their Struggle Against Apartheid, Racism, and Social Discrimination, Colonialism, Aggression and Foreign Occupation, and for Self-determination, Independence, and Social Progress for their People" demands the release of all individuals detained or imprisoned as a result of these struggles. Historically no distinction has been made between freedom fighters captured in the territory they are fighting for and those captured in the territory of the colonial power.



TREATMENT OF THE ELEVEN IN U.S. COURTS

The U.S. government's treatment of the eleven since they were taken prisoner has shown that they are not really regarded as "common criminals" as it officially maintain. Although they were originally charged with offenses for which bail would normally be in the thousands of dollars, bail was set at \$2 million each. Some were brought to court bound and gagged and even beaten by bailiffs in open courts with the assent of the judge. The security requirements for visitors to the eleven was an exception to usual practice. For some time, visitors were required to have their pictures taken, the pictures were later used by FBI agents in questioning people in the Puerto Rican community. Their sentences for state charges ranged from 8 to 30 years, and the Federal charges have added more decade to these sentences (55 to 90 years).

The major charge the U.S. government chose to use against the eleven is that of "seditious conspiracy". The charge has been used twice before against Puerto Rican Nationalists. By resorting to it, the U.S. government acknowledges that the eleven are not "common criminals", but political prisoners. In the U. S. government's own words:

"If two or more persons...conspire to overthrow, put down, or to destroy by force the Government of the United States, or to levy war against them, or to oppose by force the authority thereof...they shall each be fined not more than \$20,000 or imprisoned not more than twenty years, or both".

The charge of "seditious conspiracy" does not require specific proof of specific actions. It is enough verbally to support an organization advocating what are defined as "seditious actions".

TREATMENT OF THE ELEVEN IN U.S. PRISONS

The eleven are currently held in six different prisons, four Illinois state penitentiaries and two federal prisons. Many incidents during their first two years of incarceration exemplify the intimidation and harassment to which they have been subjected, as well as the deplorable conditions in U.S. prisons which they suffer along with other prisoners.

On several occasions they have had difficulty receiving medical attention and have been held in isolation without being charged with any disciplinary offense. During December of 1981, several of the men being held in Illinois were transferred from one prison to another, without explanation. For several days their relatives were unable to find out from prison authorities where they were.

DWIGHT CORRECTIONAL CENTER, ILLINOIS

Four of the women are incarcerated in this "correctional center" for women: Alicia Rodriguez, Ida Luz Rodriguez, Carmen Valentin and Dylcia Pagan. At one time Dwight Penitentiary was a private residence. It was later donated to the State and converted into a prison which currently has a population of 400 women. Inhumane conditions threaten the health and safety of the women imprisoned at Dwight. For a long time, prison officials have been aware of sanitation problems, but has done nothing to correct them. In February, 1981, an epidemic of Salmonella food poisoning broke out. No one outside the prison knew about the epidemic until the four P.O.s. brought it to the attention of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War. By that time, 84 women were suffering from Salmonella. Alicia Rodriguez, after asking twice to be examined for Salmonella, was found to be poisoned too. After a picket in front of the prison, and a telegram campaign, officials at Dwight Correctional Center were forced to admit the extent and seriousness of the epidemic and to remedy the situation.

In November, 1981, a problem arose with the water. The following letter to Corrections officials written by Rev. Michael Yasutake, explains the situation:

"As concerned citizens and religious people in touch with the people within Dwight, Illinois Prison, we are deeply troubled by the condition of the water which the prisoners said was "discolored and stank".

This condition has been in existence since the beginning of November, with no relief in sight. With a great sense of urgency we call for an independent investigation of this water situation at the Dwight Prison.

We have reports from some of the prisoners themselves of the weakness of their leg and arm muscles, slight fever, cramps and other signs of ill health. Also, reports from them are that distilled water is being sold to them, with inadequate amounts of it available. Furthermore, the price on the distilled water was raised as its availability became limited.

One day, the prisoners were told that the water system was being changed and that there was to be no water from 8:30 p.m. For two days thereafter one of the prisoners explained on November 12th, "the water came out black". She continued, "now it's getting lighter color. The commissary (the store for prisoners) only sells two gallons of water (per week). The water still is yellow. Warden Geisen said she is giving the prisoners distilled water, but she isn't".

We made several inquiries on the matter. To date we have no evidence of any satisfactory resolution to this serious problem. On November 20th, one of us talked by phone with a staff member of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). When asked about the polluted water, he asserted immediately that the water was "not polluted". He said that the water was checked and that it was found to be of "no health hazard". He acknowledged that the main water line to the prison was broken on November 1st and that it was repaired the following day.

When asked about the taste of the water, he said that he had no information about it and furthermore such matter is an "aesthetic question" for which he is not responsible. He said that it is common for the water to be in that state for a while. "Couple more weeks", he said on November 20th. This would mean that it would have taken at least a whole month for the water to clear, if it is to clear then.

On November 23rd Steve Punis was contacted, since he was reported by the prisoners as talking to them recently at Dwight. When phoned by one of us, he said that he is a Prisoner Advocate

employed by the Illinois Department of Correction (58 North Chicago Street, Joliet, Illinois 60481, 815-726-6114) and that it is his job to try to "resolve" whatever differences there might arise between prisoners and the prison officials and to hear grievances. He said that he was aware of the water problem and that toward the end of the week he will be able to make some recommendation regarding it.

We believe that the water which stinks and is dirty is dangerous to the health of the prisoners. Under the circumstances, we consider it urgent that an independent qualified group or firm conduct research and investigation of all matters related to water in Dwight Prison and report be made to the people of Illinois through citizen groups, including to our group and to such organizations as John Howard Association and other civic and religious groups."

The Rev. S. Michael Yasutake
The Rev. Elli Elliott
The Rev. Rempfer Whitehouse
The Rev. Jose Torres
Mattie Hopkins
Joan Nicklin

November 25, 1981



Pictured at a meeting of the Civic Committee to Support the Rights of Puerto Rican Prisoners are, front, left to right: the Rev. Elli Elliott, United Church of Christ minister; Ms. Joan Nicklin, faculty member of Central YMCA Community College, Chicago; Ms. Josefine Rodriguez, mother of Alicia and Ida Luz; back, Rev. S. Michael Yasutake, Episcopal priest-counselor at CYCC, and the Rev. Jose Torres, father of Carlos Alberto.

STATEVILLE CORRECTIONAL CENTER, ILLINOIS

Until the December shuffle, Ricardo Jimenez and Adolfo Matos were held at Stateville. On one occasion, Adolfo Matos noticed that his legal mail was being read by a guard. He questioned why his mail from his legal counsel was being tampered with and took the letter from the guard. When he refused to return the letter, the guard called in another officer and became physically abusive. Adolfo was then put in segregation for several days.

Another prisoner of war, Ricardo Jimenez, was physically abused when a correctional officer, after screaming racist and foul remarks at him, threw a large portable radio at Ricardo striking him in the head. This incident had occurred once before with the same guard and another prisoner, which resulted in a gash above the prisoner's eye.

PONTIAC CORRECTIONAL CENTER, ILLINOIS

Until being transferred to Menard Correctional Center in December, Elizam Escobar was imprisoned at Pontiac. Elizam is a gifted artist whose many paintings have been exhibited in Puerto Rico, New York, and at the Art Institute of Chicago. As one means of harassment against him, the prison system revoked his pass to the art room. Only through pressure did they renew it. For over two months, he was also denied legal visits, effectively denying his right to legal counsel.

Conditions at Pontiac prison itself remain little different from conditions at the time of the prison rebellion there in July of 1978. The majority of prisoners still spend 20 hours a day locked up two to a 5 and a half by 10 and a half cell.

MENARD CORRECTIONAL CENTER, ILLINOIS

This "correctional institution" has a practice of shooting pellets from an opening in the wall into the ceiling in order to discourage gatherings of prisoners in the halls. On one occasion when this practice was being performed, prisoner of war, Luis Rosa was affected when a pellet struck him, burning a hole in his jacket sleeve and injuring his arm. This is a very dangerous practice because of its indiscriminate nature and can cause serious injury to vital parts of the body.

METROPOLITAN CORRECTIONAL CENTER
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Maria Haydee Torres has had serious health problems since shortly after being incarcerated. One is a heart murmur which began after she suffered a severe elbow jab to her chest during a beating while she was held in New York. When she requested medical attention for this and another serious condition, she was seen by a doctor whose "examination" consisted of stating that her condition was chronic, and asked her a series of questions unrelated to her health. At this point, she refused to speak any more to this "doctor".

For the past several months, her condition has become worse. The prison has responded by pumping her with "pills" and offering her tranquilizers for the constant pain of her pelvic condition. When the prison doctor examined her, he told her that her condition was chronic and could develop into cancer. A campaign of telegrams forced the prison to bring in an outside specialist to examine her. Haydee's condition is of particular concern because another Puerto Rican Nationalist, Andres Figueroa Cordero, died of cancer which was left untreated by prison doctors.

ALFREDO MENDEZ

One of the eleven originally captured at Evanston, Alfredo Mendez, turned state evidence against a 12th Prisoner of War, Oscar Lopez Rivera, arrested in Glenview, Illinois. The methods which were used by the F.B.I. to induce betrayal of his principles are of grave concern. During the winter of 1980-81, Alfredo was at Pontiac and was taken in and out of isolation on a schedule which deprived him of phone calls to the outside for several months. At that time, other prisoners at Pontiac passed petitions and even held demonstrations in the yard to protest the unfair treatment he was receiving. Alfredo was taken from his cell at Pontiac and for three months was kept isolated from all contact with his friends, family, and legal consultants.

Precisely what was done to him during those three months is not known, but people who knew him well and saw him on the witness stand testifying against Oscar describe him as "not the same Freddie Mendez," as having undergone a fairly complete personality change.

CURRENT REPRESSION AGAINST SUPPORTERS OF
PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE

THE GRAND JURY

The grand jury system was originally intended to allow for secret investigations of criminal activity so that the reputations of innocent people could be protected. But during the Nixon era, federal grand juries began to be used to squelch political opposition. It is, indeed, a powerful repressive tool.

Under current law, witnesses may be called to testify before a grand jury without being informed of their rights or what the grand jury is investigating or whether they are being investigated. Witnesses who refuse to testify can be imprisoned for the duration of the grand jury, up to 18 months. The same people can each be called again under a new grand jury and jailed for another 18 months--for no other offense than refusing to talk.

There is also no limit to the scope of questions a witness may be asked, and grand jury prosecutors have often been known to go on "fishing expeditions" for extensive information on political and personal activities of witnesses. Grand juries have been used to jail political activists in several movements, including the anti-war movement, the women's movement, and the American Indian movement, as well as the Puerto Rican independence movement.



In 1977, four Puerto Rican and ChicanoMexicano activists in Chicago, as well as five other in New York, were jailed for several months for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating the Puerto Rican independence movement. Among them were employees of the Episcopal Church offices in New York. Now, for the tenth time in the past six years, the grand jury is being used again to stifle political opposition. During the fall of 1981, five Puerto Rican and ChicanoMexicano activists were subpoenaed to appear on December 16th before a federal grand jury in New York. The five were Steven Guerra, Andres Rosado, Julio Rosado, Maria Cueto, and Ricardo Romero. All five refused to testify and exposed the real political purposes of the grand jury to the jurors. This, and demonstrations of public support for the witnesses, forced the postponement of the hearing. These five, however, and any other that the grand jury may call, are still in jeopardy of imprisonment the next time they are called to testify.



There's no limit to the extent of the abuse of power grand juries are capable of practicing. There are two independentists presently incarcerated for refusing to collaborate with a federal grand jury convened in Puerto Rico in 1979 to investigate the Puerto Rican revolutionary movement. The two, Carlos Noya and Norberto Cintron Fiallo were expatriated to the U.S. to serve their prison sentences at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York. Their prison sentences terminate on March 31st, but as of this writing, we have learned that one of the two, Norberto Cintron Fiallo, has been served with another subpoena to appear once more before a different federal Grand Jury on March 29, 1982. This means that he will have to serve another 18 months in prison for upholding his principle of non collaboration with the grand jury.

POLICE HARASSMENT

Incidents of harassment of Puerto Rican independence supporters by Chicago Police have been increasing. One woman has had her house broken into and ransacked by police who entered illegally while she was away from home. Later she was abducted from a bus stop by police agents who forced her into a car with no license plates and interrogated her for four hours. Others have been stopped, arrested and accused of minor traffic offenses, and interrogated for long hours about their political involvement.

OUR STANCE AS THE CIVIC COMMITTEE

As a committee we neither support nor condemn any actions of which these eleven are accused. We do support the claim of these eleven men and women to P.O.W. status and the right to have their case heard before an international tribunal of their peers. We take this stance because we support the right of the people of Puerto Rico to independence and self-determination, in accordance with the inalienable rights recognized by international law.

BUT DO YOU ADVOCATE VIOLENCE?

For us the core question of violence in this case is the violence done to Puerto Rico by continued U.S. control. Members of the Civic Committee come from a variety of positions on how an end to this violence should be achieved, but we agree that it is not for us to decide this for Puerto Rico. Several individuals on the Committee came to this stance out of long-time history as pacifists with a commitment to non-violent activism.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS



NOT TERRORISTS

WHAT WE DO

The Civic Committee has been formed to:

- * assure that the eleven be treated as fairly and humanely as possible while confined in U.S. prisons;
- * promote understanding of their status as prisoners of war among a broad range of the public;
- * expose and oppose grand jury repression and other harassment of independence supporters.

We have met on various occasions with prison officials to protest harassment and discriminatory practices against the eleven prisoners. We have been successful on several occasions in gaining some alleviation, but constant vigilance is required. We have also held press conferences, met with TV station officials to protest particularly inflammatory media coverage, sponsored a public tribunal on the case, and presented the case to church and union bodies. Members of the committee also make visits to the prisoners.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Enclosed in this booklet is a petition to be signed and return to us in order to indicate your support of P.O.W. status for the prisoners. Speakers and discussion leaders are also available for programs in your organization or church. If you want to become a member of the Civic Committee, or for more information, call: (312) 278-6706. Address: 2048 West Division Street, Chicago, Illinois 60622.

Please send me more information:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

I would like to make a contribution for the work being carried out by the Civic Committee. Enclosed is \$ _____

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF THE ELEVEN PUERTO RICAN PRISONERS

Marla Haydee Torres
No. 50533
Metropolitan Correctional Center
808 Union Street - 10th Floor
San Diego, California, 92101

Oscar Lopez-Rivera
No. 87651-024
P.O. Box 1000
U.S. Penitentiary
Leavenworth, Kansas, 66048

**DWIGHT CORRECTIONAL CENTER - P.O. Box C
Dwight, Illinois, 60420.**

Dylcia Pagan - No. 7166

Marla Rodriguez - No. 7157

Carmen Valentina - No. 7167

Ida Luz Rodriguez - No. 7165

**MENARD CORRECTIONAL CENTER - P.O. Box 711
Menard, Illinois, 62259**

Dick Jimenez - No. NO2997

Elizam Escobar - No. NO2996

**STATEVILLE CORRECTIONAL CENTER
P.O. Box 112, Joliet, Illinois, 60434**

Luis Rosa - No. NO2743

**PONTIAC CORRECTIONAL CENTER - P.O. Box 99
Pontiac, Illinois, 61764**

Adolfo Matos - No. NO2998

Carlos Alberto Torres - No. NO3000

