

## VOICES

**Solution to the Puerto Rican dilemma**

I hate living in a 500-year-old colony.  
I love my American citizenship and want to always have it.  
Is there a way to reconcile these? Really?  
Yes and yes. It's called statehood.

**J. Raymond Watson**  
*Guaynabo City*

**Undemocratic scheme**

The sly, old fox, ex-Governor Carlos Romero Barceló, is at it again. He may be the most dishonest member of a very dishonest New Progressive Party. This time, fearing that a plebiscite based solely on the question, "Statehood, yes or no," would lose, he is now pushing for a vote that would ask, "Citizenship, yes or no."

No matter that Puerto Ricans already have citizenship rights, he proposes this as a scare tactic to make people think if they vote no, they will lose their American citizenship. How more dishonest can a politician get?

For Romero Barceló, there is no limit. This is the same person who tells tens of thousands of NPP members to not worry, they will be able to retain their Puerto Rican Olympic teams and their Miss Universe entries when Puerto Rico becomes a state. And the fools believe him.

It does not matter what phony statehood votes are dreamed up by the NPP, and it does not matter, how those votes turn out. Puerto Ricans may be fools, but the president and most members of Congress cannot be fooled by undemocratic schemes. The NPP is used to cheating, and it continues that party culture as it tries to bring statehood to an island that is not ready for it, and to most of the population who do not want it.

**J. D. Aragon**  
*Old San Juan*

**Reason returns to UPR Summer School**

Congratulations to the administrative board of the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus, for boosting the cost of a credit for optional summer school classes, restoring the pay scale for professors to pre-Almodóvar levels, and insisting on reasonable numbers of students per class! What the Daily Sun's report doesn't say, and those outside the UPR don't generally know, is that professors teaching a summer class get 1 ½ times a month's pay for four weeks' part-time work (two to three hours a day), plus their regular month's pay during the summer recess. This expensive deal was reportedly made because it was difficult to find professors at the Río Piedras campus to cover all summer courses with pay at "only" a month's salary. It wasn't usually too hard at the other campuses. (In the interest of full disclosure, sure, I took a summer class when it was offered to me. I would've been a fool not to. I also taught summers at the previous rate.)

Students usually take summer classes for one of two reasons. Although a few use the summer to get ahead on their academic careers or enrich their education, most take summer courses because they either failed, got a poor grade, or dropped the course before finishing. It is an open secret that some students coast most of the semester to see if they can get by with little work, and then take advantage of the late partial drop date (sometimes as late as the next to last week of classes). There have been some short-lived attempts to move the drop date up to about the eighth week, but students protest and it is moved back at campuses where it has been temporarily changed, in spite of studies showing that the mid-semester date really benefited students, motivating them to take the course seriously. Maybe some other old fogeys like me remember when students dropped a course only when powerful external forces such as an incapacitating illness put them so far behind they couldn't make up the work. It doesn't take much imagination to see that with such drops and repetitions of courses during the regular year, lower division students can't always get needed courses.

Not getting a needed course is the other main reason, and not the fault of these applicants for a summer course. Occasionally elements of the university itself may be to blame. It has been reported that in some departments professors refused to teach evening sections, which are open to regular students as well, and which can help break the logjam of access to courses in a sequence. It has been rumored that they did this so that in the survey of student desire for summer classes, these courses would get priority (at the lucrative pay rates mentioned above). Sometimes the Academic Senate catches them and thwarts their plans, sometimes not. There

are rules establishing priorities for which classes are given, but an audit of most campuses would likely reveal that those guidelines have often been followed loosely, at best. With the Pell Grant paying the bill and leaving money left over for beer (oops! I mean books.), the students generally don't mind. Summer versions have the reputation for being easier anyway. The question remains, is this the best use of finite (scarce) resources?

As Paul Harvey used to say, "Now you know the rest of the story." Who has been footing the bill for this? You, the taxpayer. Mayagüez seems to have found a good solution, and I applaud them.

**William Leffingwell**, retired professor  
*UPR-Cayey*

**Re.: Syntax!**

One is appalled over the letter sent to Congress by Sen. Roberto Arango, but only in terms of syntax and grammar; otherwise, his message is crystal clear. More appalling than that was the draft proposal written by the also Sen. Fas-Alzamora on his distorted vision of Puerto Rican Status. Equally appalling are the various non-territorial, sovereign, non-colonial concoctions devised by people who are much more befuddled than Sen. Arango. And what can be said of Puerto Rican independence that proposes no self-defense, no free enterprise socialistic welfare paradise that depends on nothing more than thin air?

At least Sen. Arango has his feet planted on terra firma; these others do not.

**Sebastián Pérez**  
*San Juan*

**Re.: 'Not enough like him' (March 25)**

Ms. Martínez sounds like a romantic ideologue with views that are found in fiction or romanticized movies, where flawed characters are often turned into heroes with masterful packaging and proper marketing. She goes to the extent of comparing Che to Jesus, because, according to her, he chose "the road to sacrifice and justice" ... and all this without asthma inhalers to protect him against the damp Sierra Maestra. I suggest Ms. Martínez do a little more extensive research beyond the fiction that she has been studying and focus on the hard facts. What did Che really accomplish? Don't tell me what he said, tell me what he did.

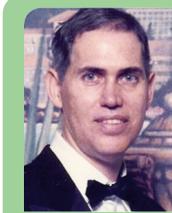
The truth of the matter is that Che will go down in history as one of the most ruthless assassins in the world. He personally oversaw the sham trials of the La Cabaña prisoners. These prisoners were mostly men opposed to Castro's regime. My father was a defense attorney assigned to defend them. Only once was he able to get anyone acquitted, and when this happened, the accused was charged with another trumped-up offense almost immediately. Che ordered the execution of 100 men on average per day, until the opposition was non-existent. There was no rule of law, only the rule of Che. Justice for Che was to take a man, without prior notification, from his cell at 10 p.m., try him before a military tribunal, condemn him to death at 12 a.m., hear his appeal at 3 a.m., and execute him at dawn, I cannot believe that Ms. Martínez wanted this kind of justice for us.

And the wonderful world he aspired to you may ask? Well, it could only be pushed on people at the end of a rifle. That is why countless number of people dared cross the dangerous channel separating us from Florida, and we only know of the ones who made it. Remember Elián? Only very desperate parents risk putting their children in such dangerous situations, just so they can have a taste of freedom. Che's utopian republic settled nothing. You still have a deep division of classes, the elite in power, and everyone else. Cuban people have lived in misery for more than 50 years, living three and four families together in houses that are falling apart, trying to figure out every day how they are going to obtain enough food to feed their families, and worrying about what they say, lest they offend someone in power, and ruthlessly get thrown in jail, or worse. I could go on, but you must have heard most of these stories. You just chose not to connect them to your hero.

You, Ms. Martínez, state that you have chosen a few creature comforts for yourself. Good for you. Too bad the Cuban people don't have that choice, in part thanks to Che.

**Lourdes Alonso**  
*Guaynabo*

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**José L. Bolívar**  
Commentary

**The expropriation of Central Playa Grande**

The first round of expropriations in Vieques began in 1941, when the United States had not yet declared war on Japan. The main landowner of Vieques, Juan Angel Tió, was expropriated on November 12, 1941, barely three weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Also, approximately 8,000 *cuerdas* [One *cuerda* equals 0.971 acres.] belonging to the Eastern Sugar Company were expropriated in 1941. The Benítez-Rieckehoff families were expropriated in 1942, and other families had to give up 2,000 *cuerdas*, so that the Navy ended up with approximately 22,000 *cuerdas* as a result of this first round of expropriations.

This first round of expropriations reduced, disastrously, the revenue of the municipal government of Vieques. Mayor Leoncio Davis complained that the municipality would no longer receive the taxes paid by the best sugar lands of Vieques. Property tax revenue amounted to \$18,700 out of a municipal budget of \$46,244 in fiscal year 1941-1942, that is 40 percent of municipal revenue, before the expropriation of the Eastern Sugar Company. The mayor projected that once Eastern Sugar stopped paying taxes, Vieques would be left without any income from property taxes.

The effect of the expropriations was much broader than is apparent at first glance, because in addition to the loss of land experienced by the landowners, the principal consequence was the expulsion of agricultural workers from the land and their reconcentration in the "Santa María slum."

The interviews carried out by Proyecto Caribeño de Justicia y Paz in 1979, involving 53 people expelled from the land, documents the troubles and tribulations of these citizens caused by the Navy expulsions. The principal landowner had to sell his lands at a price dictated by the Navy. Juan Angel Tió, owner of Central Playa Grande, considered the possibility of initiating a lawsuit against the federal government. However, three weeks after the expropriations the attack on Pearl Harbor took place and Tió decided that litigation against the federal government would be considered unpatriotic. Some families chose to go to the courts, but most of the cases were settled.

*One of the books Dr. Bolívar is working on, "Militarism and Colonialism: The U.S. Navy and the naval base in Vieques, Puerto Rico 1940-1953," will be published by Temple University Press, and will be available in early 2011.*