

VOICES

A new status solution!

I try to follow the status issues as much as possible, but we never read or hear about it in the mainland media.

I see many descriptive terms used here in regards to status: "justice, fairness, not equal, deceptive, second-class citizens, discrimination, parity with the states and no-voting representation in Congress".

These issues could be corrected with statehood and should ONLY be corrected with statehood.

I read here, never on the mainland, about the billions of federal taxpayer dollars that come to the island each year for every purpose imaginable. There are also the stimulus bills, jobs bills, etc. in which Puerto Rico should not be included.

What is not fair is that Puerto Rico receives many huge benefits without paying Federal Income Taxes. That translates "commonwealth" to "common welfare!" This so-called "Best of Both Worlds" must end. What state would not like such a "sweetheart deal?"

The solution? Let all the voters on the mainland vote on Puerto Rico's status! Statehood or independence! Period!

I'm sure if all those tax-paying citizens up north knew they were supporting such a huge "welfare case," they would vote for statehood or independence without hesitation.

I support statehood, but hey, with independence Puerto Rico could ask everyone for foreign aid.

**Donn M. Smith
Boquerón**

UPR'S Babel Tower

The present UPR operational chaos has many roots. Problems and their negative effects have been accumulating for many years. The irresponsible inaction by many political appointees, executives and bureaucrats, still noticeable today, has been historically resolved by obtaining long-term loans, not paying existing debts, blaming some former and outside UPR people, etc.

The Governor indicated in his recent message that funds to be assigned to the UPR System will be based on the existing formula, which will result in a projected deficit for fiscal year 2010-11 surpassing \$100 million. He further correctly stated that even if tuition is raised, the extra revenue will not solve the huge crisis.

Then, what are the present UPR overseers, executives and bureaucracy to do to solve this giant problem? Up to the present, the UPR Board of Trustees has not generated any new ideas. Their projected public position is best described by an old song authored by Pedro Flores, whose principal lyrics are:

Yo no se nada (I know nothing)

Yo llegué ahora mismo (I just got here)

Si algo pasó (If anything happened)

Yo no estaba aquí (I wasn't here)

In an effort to help the UPR board improve their image and reduce substantially or eliminate the projected \$100 million deficit, I respectfully suggest that they appoint a committee of knowledgeable UPR, active and retired, personnel of all political philosophies, that may include former bureaucrats.

This group will evaluate, amongst other alternatives, the possibility of eliminating the UPR president's position and most of his office's bureaucracy (which costs around \$100 million per year), and the possibility of delegating such functions in the UPR's University Board, composed of the chancellors of the 11 campuses, where the presiding position would then be rotated among the Chancellors — a proposal, that if approved, will possibly require modifying existing laws and regulations.

It is necessary to mention that, at present, the UPR president's office bureaucracy duplicates many functions routinely performed by each of the campuses.

Others, as much or more worried than I, such as UPR personnel, both active and retired, could and should also provide additional positive achievable ideas, that should also be evaluated by the proposed committee.

Manuel Soldevila Martínez, retired UPR scientist-professor and proud grandfather of a UPR student

What next?

It seems to me that the Daily Sun has taken an editorial slant in writing about the UPR shutdown. A headline says it all, "De La Torre shuns students on eve of stoppage." The story then says that UPR President de la Torre refused to meet with the students. Only after reading the entire story do we hear that the official student representatives have formed a

gang of 17 to come to his office to meet.

Anyone who has ever attended a meeting or a conference, or a negotiating session knows that such a huge group can only result in confusion, shouting, chaos, and absolutely no progress on the issues to be resolved. It is too bad that the official student delegation does not feel it has the capacity to meet and negotiate with university officials. Instead, they spring a surprise on the president and say they want to bring in a newly formed student group.

The problem with past UPR administrations is that they always cave in to extreme student groups, who are not representative of the entire campus. But, it is also students' fault for not expressing their views on how to proceed, and who let the extremists take total control.

The reality is there — UPR has a massive deficit. It no longer matters whose fault it is, as I can guess it is the fault of the entire campus, from the students to professors to officials, to legislators, to the governor, to the public. UPR has been operating in the same way as the entire government has been for years, spending money it does not have. Students have been protesting needed increases in tuition, necessary increases, and want everything for free, just as they have been living their entire youthful lives. In the end, UPR will cave, as it always does, and the legislature will increase the budget, and the public, the middle class, will pay for it, and the rest, almost the majority of Puerto Rico, goes on getting freebies and wondering what next to ask for.

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

Damn car lobby!

What's the difference between an air conditioner and a tree? An air conditioner cools you off. Really? Don't you know the thing is blowing hot air outside? And that all the other units in the areas are spewing hot air on yours, making the comfort you crave all the harder and more expensive.

You get a net gain out of a tree because it spends the days turning radiance from the sun into stalks and leaves and avocados and mangos. A tree is free and it cools everything and everybody.

So why do we have wolf packs of municipal workers, who despise anything with leaves on it because it reminds them of a past of rural poverty, marauding around in white pick-ups all day chainsawing down any tree that has the audacity to grow into contact with a sidewalk. "If you let the tree crack the sidewalk and somebody falls, he'll sue the commonwealth," they intone. Seriously.

And the automobiles. The million of them. An automobile engine burns at a few thousand degrees F, we seem to forget, surely enough to heat up San Juan several degrees, on top of the degree hike from all the air conditioners. But we'll never get usable mass transit because politicians will never anger the car sales-leasing-repair-theft establishment who underwrite their election campaigns, so much for democracy in Puerto Rico.

And if contributing to the greenhouse effect were punishable, we'd get nuked.

**Bob Harris
Condado**

Fangs from the Ice Age

Two years ago, history was made in France, the first face transplant was performed, apparently successfully. On a woman whose face had been ripped off by a dog. Yes, those precious darlings. I am told that France is like Puerto Rico in that all sorts of laws protect dogs from people, but none protect people from dogs.

Here you get more jail time for killing a dog than for killing a human being (in a fit of anger and you don't have a record). Year before last as well, here in Puerto Rico, a woman read over the radio a poem all about dog being God spelled backwards. A few months after that a pack of street mutts bit a small child to death.

Upon the end of the Ice Age, 10,000 years ago, early farmers and ranchers figured that if they fed wolves they would serve to keep out intruders. Dogs started out as weapons-- which they still are, better than a pistol and you don't need a permit.

If someday we learn to live in peace with one another, then, our pets will truly be pets: pussycats, canaries, pigeons, chameleons, turtles, lizards, monkeys, and so on.

**Juan Pérez
Altamira**

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Santiago de Cuba: A personal and historical perspective

I have returned to Cuba, but now to Santiago, the city where I was born. All I remember of Santiago is through the eyes of a seven-year-old, at the time



**José L.
Bolívar,
Ph.D.**

of the Cuban Revolution. Bits and pieces of disjointed thoughts still stand out, even after so many years.

Santiago was the hub of the revolution. It was therefore not surprising to see children playing with bullets given to them by rebels. Santiago had a harbor and a Spanish fort not unlike the ones in San Juan, Puerto Rico. As a child, I liked to visit the fort, and play in all of its dungeons. Little did I realize at the time how the history of this fort, and the history of my family were intertwined, as my great grandfather, Federico Pérez Carbo, later the first governor of the Oriente province under the newly formed Republic of Cuba, and his friend Emilio Bacardí, founder of the rum empire that bears his name, were both jailed and held in this very fort by the Spanish authorities. Was I standing in the same cell, decades later, where these two men were imprisoned?

Pérez Carbo and Bacardí were suspected of being sympathizers with the leadership that advocated for independence. After their imprisonment in Santiago's El Morro, they were taken aboard the Spanish ship Antonio López (sunk in front of the Bacardí Rum factory by the American fleet in 1898) to Chafarinas, not before stopping in San Juan. They finally escaped to Cádiz, and then to New York, where there were many Cuban exiles. They eventually returned to Cuba. (Pérez Carbo, a journalist, wrote a detailed account of his travels that can be found in the Havana National Archives). During the Second War of Independence, also known as the Spanish American War, Pérez Carbo served as a colonel in the Cuban army under Antonio Maceo, and after being wounded served the remainder of the war in Jacksonville, Florida, helping with the logistics of obtaining resources for the Cuban army.

I also recall the ships sunken near the beaches close to the fort. From the perspective of a seven-year-old, they looked large, and tempting to play in. Unfortunately, I never got the chance. Much, much later, I learned that these were the remnants of the Spanish fleet that was anchored in Santiago. On Sunday, July 3, 1898 it was about to engage the Americans. According to an 1898 account of the battle by John C. Hemment, an eye witness aboard the cruiser Brooklyn, Admiral Cervera's flagship, the María Teresa, made a dash to open sea in order to engage the cruiser Brooklyn. She was followed by the Viscaya, the Cristobal Colón, the Almirante Oquendo, and two torpedo boats, the Furor and the Plutón. As soon as they were outside El Morro, they, along with the fort, opened fire on the American fleet. The battle did not last long, and the Spanish decided to beach their fleet so that their sailors could swim ashore and escape to Santiago. The ships still lie in the same place more than a century after the battle! Only the María Teresa was refloated and towed into Guantánamo Bay.

As I left Cuba, little did I know that this would be the last time that my family would be together. Revolutions and civil wars, after all, have their casualties. I plan to return to Santiago some day, as I would like to revisit El Morro, the beached remnants of the Spanish fleet, and the house where I lived. Hopefully, they will all still be there.

The author's book "Guerra, Banca y Desarrollo: La Historia del Banco de Fomento y la Industrialización de Puerto Rico" is due out in November. E-mail José at josebolivar@aol.com. On the Net: www.josebolivar.com.