

## RESOLUTION TO HONOR THE LIFE AND STRUGGLE OF REVEREND JOSE "EL VIEJO" TORRES

**WHEREAS.** Jose Alberto Torres (El Viejo) was born on June 9, 1923 in Ponce Puerto Rico; AND,

**WHEREAS.** he completed his academic and theological studies at the Interamerican University in San German and the Evangelical Seminary in Puerto Rico and became a reverend; AND,

**WHEREAS.** in 1959 Reverend Torres was called by the Congregational Church in New York to work with the Spanish Community at Martha Memorial Evangelical and Reformed Church in Manhattan; AND,

**WHEREAS.** in 1962 he was called by the Community Renewal Society of Chicago to minister the growing Hispanic Community at the First Congregational Church of Chicago; AND,

**WHEREAS.** during his time with the First Congregational Church he was a instrumental leader in the struggle to ensure civil and human rights for the Puerto Rican community and other underrepresented minorities, dealing with issues that ranged from residential displacement to improving housing, education, employment, community rights, and increased representation in local politics; AND,

**WHEREAS.** as a testament to his commitment to social justice he marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Alabama in 1964 and was part of a group of ministers that brought Dr. Kings message to the First Congregational Church and his community in Chicago; AND

**WHEREAS.** he worked tirelessly to improve his community of Humboldt Park as a member of the First Puerto Rican Parade Committee and was a founding member of the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center which stand to this day and have helped guide so many of our youth and reaffirm our cultural identity; AND,

**WHEREAS.** he remained steadfast in the struggle for the self-determination of his nation and the freedom of his people to his last days. A struggle he valiantly pursued with no interest in recognition or accolades, making the most solemn of sacrifices as a husband and father in the years he remained separated from his wife and his son who were, and in the case of his son continue to be, incarcerated under political pretenses; AND

**WHEREAS.** Jose Torres also known as "Papi Viejo" demonstrated his great compassion and unconditional love by raising Veronica Ocasio and Ileana Ortiz, daughters of Kathy Ortiz, as his own children, providing them with the best love, guidance and inspiration a father could give.

**WHEREAS.** Jose "El Viejo" Torres passed away of cancer on Saturday, February 5, 2005 at the age of 81; AND,

**WHEREAS.** with the death of Jose "El Viejo" Torres Puerto Ricans everywhere have lost a great leader in our ongoing struggles and a constant source of inspiration in our lives; NOW, THEREFORE

**BE IT RESOLVED.** that Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Chicago City Council expresses its deepest condolences to his widow Alejandrina Torres his 4 daughters Norma, Nidza Margarita, Liza Beth, and Catalina, his son Carlos Alberto Torres, and to the children and families he loved as his own.

Introduced February 9, 2005

Alderman Billy Ocasio, 26th

# ¡El Viejo Vive!



...en la memoria  
de nuestra gente

Memorial Program  
Sunday, February 20, 2005 · 4:00pm  
Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center  
Chicago IL

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## Program

### OPENING INVOCATION

Rev. Walter Coleman,  
Adalberto United Methodist Church

### WELCOME

José E. López, Executive Director, PRCC  
· Unveiling of dedicatory banner  
· "Rev. José Alberto Torres",  
poem by Carlos Quiles, read by  
Norma Peña  
· Presentation of City Council Resolution  
by Alderman Billy Ocasio  
· Reading of Special Messages  
- Carlos Alberto Torres by Catalina Torres  
- Oscar López Rivera by Norma Torres  
- Ortiz Family by Veronica Ocasio

### DR. PEDRO ALBIZU CAMPOS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PRESENTATION

### REMEMBERING "EL VIEJO"

· Irma Romero  
· Luis Sanabria  
· From the public  
· Alejandrina Torres

### CLOSING BENEDICTION

Rev. C. Nozomi Ikuta,  
United Church of Christ

### LA BORINQUEÑA

Lourdes Lugo

Special thanks to thinedge films, CAN-TV and  
all those who made this event possible.

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# Messages

## Puerto Rican Political Prisoners

### Carlos Alberto Torres

"When I think about Viejo I think that he not only lived a long life, but that he lived a good and loving long life. We are here to remember and say farewell to Viejo. I think we all sense that words alone will not convey the full essence of the man nor of our loss. I believe that Viejo himself conveyed the content of his individual existence through his actions and attitude in life.

I admire that Viejo was not satisfied with taking a back seat to how he and our community should live our lives. His ministry and his lifelong commitment to achieving social justice is the life of one compelled by his humanity to evolve as a person, to love and share in the lives and struggles that so characterized his own existence and to leave this world a better one than we found it. What a wonderful legacy he has left us!

We have our memories. These have been shaped by how Viejo has touched all our lives. But, how much of who we are and what we've accomplished can we attribute to ourselves without recognizing in it Viejo's love and support, his work and wisdom as well as a father's impeccable sense of forgiveness when we've made mistakes?

If I were to ask those who loved Viejo as a father to stand, would the only ones standing be Normi, Nidza, Liza, Cata and myself? I ask that those who love Viejo as a friend, a mentor, as a pastor and as a father, to stand in spirit, as his children, in loving memory of the father we shall always miss".

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**Oscar López Rivera**

Me enteré de la muerte de nuestro querido Viejo hace apenas unos minutos. Estoy pensando como su muerte estará afectando a su amada compañera Alex, y a su hijo Carlos Alberto. Supongo que ambos estarían preparados para enfretar este doloroso momento. Pero no importa lo preparado que uno (a) crea estar, perder a un ser querido nunca es fácil.

Anoche llamé a José y toda la conversación giró alrededor del Viejo. José acababa de regresar de visitarlo. Me dijo que lo había reconocido y que el habló con lucidez por unos cuantos minutos. Ambos llegamos a la conclusion que lo que lo matenía vivo era su amor por la vida y el mucho amor que recibe. Reconocimos que el era una institución en la comunidad Boricua de Chicago, un pionero en la lucha de justicia social y los derechos civiles (incluyendo al de los afro americanos) que siempre había defendido abiertamente la lucha por la independendencia de Puerto Rico.

El Viejo me dio el privilegio de conocerlo y de conocer diferentes facetas de su vida. Lo conocí como un gran padre de familia, como el compañeros amoroso de Alex, como líder religioso, y como hombre compasivo, solidario, valiente y falible.

En 1971, en su humilde iglesia en la Grand Avenue, nos recogió y nos dio espacio para trabajar. Desde allí organizamos la lucha en escuelas como la Tuley/Clemente, la de Circle Campus (lease Universidad de Illinois en Chicago), la campaña contra la brutalidad policiaca, trabajó en favor de la liberación de nuestros Heroes Nacionales, se esforzó para ayudar a presos en la penitenciaria estatal de Stateville, trabajó para fundar la escuela alternativa Don Pedro Albizu Campos y fundamos el periódico "El Coqui." También trabajamos con el Viejo y su iglesia en contra de la jerarquía de la Iglesia Unida de Cristo que pretendía quitar

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al Viejo y eliminar la iglesia. La confrontación fue uno de los momentos más memorables que experimentamos allí. Durante los años que trabajamos juntos, el Viejo jugó un papel crucial en todos los esfuerzos que se hicieron.

El Viejo me dio buenos ejemplos. Lamentablemente no supe apreciar algunos de ellos. El era un hombre libre de rencor, venganza e inquina. Ni siquiera guardó rencor o venganza contra las personas que lo traicionaron y pretendieron hacerle daño. En ocasiones me "enfogone" con el porque era demasiado tolerante con personas que le habian causado dolor. No fue hasta despues de yo estar preso por muchos años que logré apreciar la importancia y el valor de su ejemplo. El rencor y la venganza empañan el juicio y embrutece el espiritu. No podemos experimentar la libertad espiritual a menos que no estemos libres de rencor y venganza. El Viejo disfrutaba de libertad espiritual.

El y yo dejamos de dialogar por muchos años. Pero siempre estuvo presente en mi mente y corazón. Quizas no le cumplí bien o le fallé. Como se que el toleraba los fallos de otros espero haya tolerado los mios.

5 de febrero del 2005

P.D. Ayer mi madre hubiera cumplido 89 años de edad.

Se que ella quería mucho al Viejo.

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**Former Puerto Rican Political Prisoners****Alicia Rodríguez**

Viejo, thank you for touching the lives of so many people. I met you after graduating from high school. I remember those years as being very militant both in the community and in the world at large. It was the first time I was exposed to a man of the cloth who preferred to take his sermons out of the pulpit and into the streets or in press conferences to denounce issues such as police brutal-

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ity, unemployment, slum landlords and the release of our Puerto Rican Nationalists. What boldness! Yet, what impressed me more than anything else was that you were puertorriqueño. That was very powerful to witness in the streets of Chicago during the 1970s. You were a voice that challenged and demanded changes not only in our community but in ourselves.

Alejandrina, Berti, and the rest of the family, gracias for sharing El Viejo with us. My father loved his sense of humor and constantly reminded us that El Viejo was his best friend. My mother treasured his companionship and unwavering support in their long years of community and political work.

Among many fond memories of El Viejo what stands out for me are his many visits when I was in prison. We never ran out of things to talk about nor chocolate to eat. Te queremos mucho. Hasta la victoria.

### **Luis Rosa**

y familia, Magdalena, Inara  
Hipolita, Félix, Pepe, José, Cano y Merilan

No se cuando te conocí. Quizas fue en ese instante en que volví a nacer; cruzando las calles de una ciudad fria. Quizás conoci primero esa sonrisa de sus ojos y la alegría tierna de su abrazo. Lo que si se es que llegaste a mi vida para quedarte. Viejo, padre de mi hermano, hombre de pueblo: "El Viejo" lleno de amor y convicción: "El Viejo" que emanaba el amor en su más pura expresión - el amor hacia su prójimo. El amor que es movido a acción por el dolor ajeno. El amor que desplaza sus necesidades propias para atender las de su pueblo. Ni a tu querido Ponce le pertenecias ya. Ni a Chicago donde creaste tus mas bellas obras. Porque al darte a tu pueblo y a otros pueblos, en los actos mas solidarios, te convertiste en ellos y para ellos, los que marchaban por la libertad. "El Viejo" poeta cristiano que facilmente se mezcló con "el Viejo"

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marxista en la cruzada histórica donde por necesidad el amor tenía que ser la práctica diaria, el pan de nuestra alma y la guía de nuestra lucha. Mi querido Viejo, supiste ser padre, compañero fiel y nos hiciste gozar con tu presencia. Nos toca ahora seguir la marcha, perpetuando tus ejemplos, tu sonrisa, el gozo en tu voz... liberandonos cada vez un poco mas y asegurando que nuestro Viejo sea eterno.

### **Edwin Cortés Acevedo**

Querida compañera y familia: Recibe de mi familia y compañeros/as en lucha nuestras mi más sentido pesame ante la caída del el "Viejo". No sabes la tristeza que siento no poder viajar para alla para transmitirle el verdadero amor que siento por ustedes. Espero en un futuro cercano poder encontrarnos. Conocí al "Viejo" en la luchas para conseguir un programa de reclutamiento en la Universidad de Illinois Chicago, una que se gano y cuyo programa hasta el dia de hoy se llama L.A.R.E.S. Después logramos un centro cultural latinoamericano Rafael Cintron Ortiz. El "Viejo" ha estado presente en todas las luchas que se dieron en Chicago para combatir el Gran Jurado Federal, liberar a los Cinco Nacionalistas y a nosotros, construcción del Paseo Boricua, la escuelita, etc. Estas luchas son una verdadera ejemplo que luchar no es con bonitas palabras y discursos sino con hechos. El mejor homenaje que les podemos brindar al "Viejo" es seguir sin descanso la lucha para liberar su hijo y los demas presos politicos y construir la nueva patria que tanto anhelo.

## **Messages from Puerto Rico**

### **Puerto Rican Committee for Human Rights**

February 12, 2005

Viejo Torres: Champion of Human Rights

At the end of 1980, Puerto Rico's national poet and revolutionary Juan Antonio Corretjer, at the time the Secretary General of the

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Puerto Rican Socialist League, took the initiative to call a meeting at the Bar Association, where various people met to constitute what would be the first committee in support and defense of the Puerto Rican prisoners of war. It was there that we met Reverend Torres. He had traveled from Chicago with the sole purpose of being present at this necessary and patriotic meeting. We bonded with him immediately. He spoke of each of the prisoners as if they were his own sons and daughters. For us, Viejo Torres, as we all lovingly called him, completed his mission. He came to solicit solidarity and support, and he accomplished just that. Other Puerto Ricans in other times did exactly the same thing. From Paris, Betances appealed to Hostos to work to form opinion in South America and New York to favor revolution in the Antilles. Reverend Torres, a loving father, husband, comrade, lives in another form of life, the memory of his acts and his passion for human liberation and the freedom of Puerto Rico. Reverend Torres, present with us here, is a champion and precursor to the defense of human rights of those who "live in the underground army of suns that vibrate in every peoples sunken among chains." Today we say to him: Until our homeland is free, Viejo! We will win!

(quote from 23 de septiembre, a poem by Julia de Burgos)

### **Roy Brown**

Toda una vida con El Viejo, su serenidad, como una torre inamovible, y su dulzura ante el remolino del diario luchar por la cordura. Deben estar todos traumatizados con su partida. Y a la vez, todos deben estar emocionados ante una vida tan excelente, celebrando que tuvieron el placer de compartir la lucha con ese gigante. Siempre me acuerdo de la primera vez que visité Chicago y visité su casa. Me habló de Fabiola, mi madre, de su vida y muerte. Fue gentil conmigo entonces, tocó la fibra, reconcilié lo importante de lo personal en toda relación de compañeros y fuimos amigos siempre.

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### **José A. Rivera Colón y Fa.**

#### **Tony Mapeyé**

Por este medio deseo expresar mi más sentida solidaridad a Alejandrina, Lisa y Catalina tras la irreparable pérdida del Rvdo. Torres, "El Viejo" como cariñosamente todos lo llamábamos. Mi pésame extensivo al resto de los hijos en especial a Carlos Alberto Torres, quien se halla privado de su libertad por el único delito de quererla para su patria. Toda mi familia, como mis compañeros del Grupo Mapeyé nos unimos al dolor que nos causa esta pérdida, pero también celebramos la rica y productiva vida de ejemplo y de lucha que nos lega para la historia.

## **Solidarity Messages**

### **Veronica Ocasio and the Ortiz Family**

It takes an extraordinary, special human being to raise children and support a family that are not his own. Papi Viejo did just that, when my mom, Kathy Ortiz, came from Puerto Rico pregnant with my older sister Iliana, he and Alejandrina opened their home and hearts to provide her with shelter, food and unconditional love. That was in 1968. I was born into this family, the Torres Family, in 1973. They shared our happiest moments and our greatest sorrows. My father is and always will be the man who provided me with unconditional love, support, discipline, spiritual guidance and a deep sense of commitment to my community of Humboldt Park and those less fortunate. I am truly blessed to have been raised by a great leader and man with a wonderful sense of humor and ultimately the best father I ever known - Papi Viejo. We will miss you immensely.

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**Enrique Fernández Toledo**

Cuando pienso en Viejo pienso, no en edad ni en tiempo cronológico, pienso en fundamento, base, permanencia, en el sentido de "siempre presente", pienso en indispensable, en el sentido del que siempre lucha. Pienso en un amigo entrañable.

Y, así como Viejo siempre decía "presente" cuando se le llamaba – que no era siempre que venía, pues muchas veces sabía cuando lo necesitaban, y venía de voluntario, sin que se lo pidieran – siempre que pienso en Viejo se dibuja en mi cara una sonrisa. Porque Viejo, a pesar de los muchos golpes que recibió en la vida -- contaba 18 fracturas de hueso y su meñique izquierdo testimoniaba una juventud de travesuras y deportes – siempre reía y hacia reír, siempre alegre, siempre contagioso en su optimismo.

"Siempre", "permanencia", "perseverancia", "constancia" y Viejo son sinónimos: Siempre amó a su patria y a su gente; fue una figura permanente en nuestras vidas individuales y de comunidad; perseveró en la lucha por la libertad de nuestra patria y por la justicia, y fue un amigo y compañero constante. Ese fue y será siempre nuestro querido Viejo.

**Jan Susler, People's Law Office**

Thanks to Viejo, his sense of his people, of community, of humankind, who brings us together to celebrate his long, full, rich life. We will miss his phenomenal knowledge, his calm, sure commitment to justice. We will miss his well roundedness, his love of opera, ribald jokes, fried food. But we need not miss his spirit of love and resistance. He will accompany us as we carry on his proud tradition, his sense of community and Puerto Ricanness and love of humankind, as we continue to work for the release of his son Carlos Alberto and that of Oscar López Rivera and Haydée Beltrán.

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**Marta Rodríguez**

I met Viejo in September of 1973 upon entering the Pedro Albizu Campos High School. He was our Spanish teacher. After years of fighting with overly authoritarian teachers at the American schools, what first struck me was his jovial, warm and easy manner. He met our discomfort with spelling or grammar with a great deal of patience and humor, which made the learning environment a lot less intimidating.

Viejo had a knack for making many of the people he met a part of his household and family. I spent the better part of my years in high school at his house, and so did many of my classmates. We watched TV with Alex 'til all hours, played with Catalina and Lisa who were little, and went out on drives with him. Often, when filling out forms that asked about my place of residence, I had to remind myself that I did not live in Oak Park, where Viejo and his family lived.

Tolerance is a very hard lesson to learn – for some of us more than others – but I think I began to learn some with Viejo. You see, Viejo, who took his work as a teacher very seriously, forgave me for momentarily falling asleep in his class once after a night of insomnia. He spoke of the incident as if it had been a daily occurrence, which it was not, but he spoke of it with much humor and didn't hold it against me. Viejo was tolerant of my sometimes less than courteous responses to some of his needling. He was pretty cool about my atheism, so I came to feel comfortable about going to church from time to time. Though he hated cigarettes and I smoked, he was gracious when I'd land in his house and stay up smoking and talking with Alex till dawn.

If Viejo considered you a friend, he kept track of you no matter where you went. He made a point of looking me up whenever he traveled to Puerto Rico, no matter where I lived. When I moved to Boston he visited me frequently. If anyone needed those frequent

¡"El Viejo"  
Vive!

...en la  
memoria de  
nuestra gente



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flyer miles it was Viejo on account of some of his nomadic friends.

The price exacted on Viejo and his family for their political beliefs and work is well known in Puerto Rico and many Puerto Rican communities in the U.S. But rare is the person that confronts adversity with the grace that they have. No personal crisis ever kept Viejo from opening his doors to his friends and making time for them.

Viejo, this is hasta siempre and not goodbye, because I'll always remember you.

**Michael E, Deutsch**  
**People's Law Office**

For me, "El Viejo" and the First Church, was the spiritual center of the Puerto Rican Independence movement in Chicago. Rev. Torres was not simply a minister to the movement or a supporter of the movement, but he was an integral part of the movement itself. At the rallies, in the demonstrations, and in the courtrooms "El Viejo" was always present, shouting and demanding the freedom of the prisoners and the end to U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico.

And the First Church was always there for the movement, a center, a haven, in good times and bad. Who can forget, the wonder and happiness that enveloped all of us when Rafael, Lolita, Irvin and Oscar were released and chose to come to Chicago to a rally at Viejo's church. Or the sadness and shock of the death of Angel Rodriguez Cristobal and the memorial we held at the First Church. Nor can we ever forget the hundreds of events, dinners, cultural programs and celebrations that we enjoyed with our friends and families.

Viejo's commitment and sacrifice is well known to all of us. His son Carlos, his then daughter-in-law Haydee and his wife Alejandrina all ripped from their community and his family and imprisoned by the

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U.S. government. Despite these great losses and the hardships, Viejo never wavered or faltered in his public support for independence and for the movement's freedom fighters.

Throughout all of it, Viejo always kept his sense of humor, his readiness to tell a joke or a humorous story or to just laugh and smile and to let you know how much he cared about his family the church and the movement for justice for all. I am reminded of Viejo marching in Selma with Dr. King.

You judge the measure of a man, not only by his principles and deeds, but by his family. In Alejandrina, his beloved wife, and Norma, Carlos, Nidza, Liza and Catalina, his wonderful children, we see the greatness of this man.

My dear Rev. Torres, I will truly miss you, but whenever I see someone stand up for justice and freedom, I will think of you and you will always be in my heart."

**Susan Rosenberg, former North American Political Prisoner**

Please extend my Mother Bella and my self's deepest feelings of love and solidarity to Alejandrina, Liza and Catalina. We spent many hours together over the course of many years and loved and deeply respected Viejo.

**Diana Block, Claude Marks, Rob McBride, Donna Willmott**

Our hearts go out to you with the loss of Viejo. We will always remember his dedication to his community and the tremendous sacrifices he made for the right of Puerto Ricans to determine their destiny as a people. Our thoughts are with you as you gather to honor the life of this man who inspired so many to be part of a lifelong struggle for justice.

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**Judith Mirkinson**

I first met Viejo (Reverend Torres) in November 1979. It was not a happy occasion. We were both in Puerto Rico for the funeral of Angel Rodriguez Cristobal who had been murdered in the federal prison in Tallahassee. The funeral was very militant and very sad. There was an open coffin and it was clear that Angel had been beaten. His mother was inconsolable. It was an eye opener for me. I had never been to Puerto Rico and here I could see both the soul and strength of the movement.

I also got to see the beauty of the island and understand its history. Part of this experience was with Viejo who took me around one day and showed me the sights. We were with my 9 month old daughter Ona who was just beginning to talk. She could say two words and by the time she left she had added a third: "Beso" because Viejo kept saying "Dame un beso" and she would oblige him and pucker up. These are some of the strongest images I have of Viejo - his genuine warmth and kindness. All of the children remember him with great fondness - he would always ask after them and then tell me the latest doings of his own family.

But Viejo had another side, which I first saw in Tucson Arizona. Susan Rosenberg and Alejandrina had been imprisoned there for about a year. They were housed in a tiny unit and were only allowed to go into a small "cage" outside. They wore special orange jumpsuits and had their visits monitored in a special table. We decided to have a demonstration to protest their conditions. Viejo came from Chicago and we trekked in from California. We arrived after many hours to learn that Alex and Susan had been moved only days before. Viejo got everything organized and we decided to go ahead with the demo. Viejo gave one fiery speech after another. He was articulate, pointed in his criticism of the US government and passionate in his support of Puerto Rican independence and all the political prisoners.

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Viejo's love for Alejandrina was there for all to see as was his absolute support and loyalty. The same went for his children Carlos and Haydee. He would also always ask me about the other prisoners, particularly Susan and Silvia - who had been with Alex in Lexington. He was concerned about their situation and never failed to send his greetings and love.

It was the combination of all these qualities, his kindness and warmth and his intelligence and determination that allowed him to fight for the freedom of the prisoners and the freedom of Puerto Rico itself. It is all these qualities that I remember when I think of Viejo. Danos un beso Viejo. We love you.

**Gemma Mirkinson**

I have an almost physical memory of Viejo. I was only five years old, in a Spanish immersion program in San Francisco. I was in Chicago, on one of my family's many trips for a political meeting or program... I don't really remember. What I do remember, however, is Viejo. I remember him talking to me and rubbing my head, with soft kind hands. He had heard that I was learning Spanish - something he highly approved of - so he asked me to speak to him. I was shy but he was so gentle, so warm that I think I must have said a few words. I certainly never forgot him.

**Nozomi Ikuta**

Although I had the privilege of meeting Rev. Torres personally only after his retirement, he continued to exude his love for his family and community, and his longing for his imprisoned wife and son. Despite his declining health, he extended to me the generous hospitality so many others had already found in his enormous heart. To Viejo, and to the family, community, and patria who mourn his loss, we owe our continued struggle for justice, freedom, and Carlos Alberto's return home.

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## Mayra Martínez-Fernández

Viejo, mi querido viejo...

Viejo fue de tantas formas el padre que nunca tuve. Durante esos ocho años que viví en Chicago, Viejo fue mi alcahuete, mi consejero, mi amigo: todo lo que yo soñaba que un padre es. Para ambos fue amor a primera vista. Me trajo cerca y nunca me dejó ir. Por mi parte, cuando me fui de Chicago ya yo tenía al Viejo pegado al corazón, así es que me lo traje conmigo a Washington.

Recuerdo que siempre lo recibía con la canción que en mi mente fue escrita para él, que Danny Rivera tan lindo canta: "Mi Viejo."

Es un buen tipo mi viejo  
que anda solo y esperando,  
tiene la tristeza larga  
de tanto venir andando.  
Yo lo miro desde lejos,  
pero somos tan distintos;  
Es que el creció con el siglo  
con tranvía y vino tinto.

Viejo, mi querido viejo,  
ahora ya camina lento,  
como perdonando el viento.  
Yo soy tu sangre, mi viejo:  
soy tu silencio y tu tiempo.

Él tiene los ojos buenos  
y una figura pesada,  
la edad se le vino encima,  
sin carnaval ni comparsa.  
Yo tengo los años nuevos  
y el hombre, los años viejos:  
el dolor lo lleva adentro  
y tiene historia sin tiempo.

Viejo, mi querido viejo,  
ahora ya camina lento,  
como perdonando al viento.  
Yo soy tu sangre, mi viejo:  
soy tu silencio y tu tiempo.

Viejo, ya nos encontraremos otra vez  
para que me hagas todos los chistes  
que vas a aprender en el Cielo.  
Mientras tanto, pórtate bien y no le  
des mucha candela a los ángeles.  
Te querré siempre.

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## Pablo Medina

Dentro de toda esta lucha a la que hemos ya dedicado gran parte de nuestras vidas y a la que tal vez le dediquemos el resto de los días que nos quedan, pasamos por momentos tristes que nos hacen apreciar más la vida y nos ayudan a reafirmar nuestro compromiso con esta. Sin embargo en toda esa jornada, pavimentada de dolor y alegría, llegan a nuestras vidas personas que nutren nuestra alegría y nos inspiran mientras nos sobreponemos de los momentos difíciles y dolorosos. Ya muchos de ustedes se habrán enterado del fallecimiento de uno de esos pocos imprescindibles que llegan y se quedan con nosotros para siempre.

Tal fue el caso del compañero, Reverendo José Alberto Torres, "El Viejo. Esposo de Alejandrina Torres y padre de Carlos Alberto Torres, dos ejemplares compañeros que han hecho realidad la palabra sacrificio, al sacrificar su libertad luchando por la libertad de la patria. El Viejo, como lo llamábamos con cariño, como padre y esposo de tales ilustres compañeros (ras), también sacrificó el tiempo que de otra forma hubiera disfrutado con su esposa, mientras esta estuvo ausente, y de su hijo, quien desde entonces permanece encarcelado.

Yo conocí al Viejo, desde mucho antes que Alejandrina y Carlos hubieran caído como prisioneros políticos, como resultado de su ilustre lucha en pos de la libertad de la patria. Yo apenas un muchacho, el ya lo habían apodado "El Viejo," lo conocí preocupado por el bienestar de nuestro pueblo tanto aya como acá. En fin, luchando por la vida, una jornada que nunca vi flaquear, pues lucho hasta sus últimos minutos, tanto por la vida como contra la muerte. Sería injusto tratar de recoger en estos tres párrafos las contribuciones de tan ejemplar compañero.

Pero en cuanto a ese Viejo, digo con mucho orgullo, que fue un ejemplar e incondicional luchador por la paz y la justicia humana.

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La antorcha de luz que siempre estuvo encendida hasta siempre, y que lo alumbró en sus contribuciones a las luchas de derechos humanos y civiles más allá de lo nuestro, fue siempre la libertad por su patria Puerto Rico. Quien luchó sin importarle negarse así mismos reconocimientos y/o privilegios que vienen con vivir, para dar a la vida, a esa lucha en pos de la justicia y la libertad humana, lo mejor de sí. Un verdadero imprescindible y un ejemplo de compañero. Y como aquellos que hacen de la vida tan lindo sacrificio, el "Viejo" tampoco muere mientras estemos con vida, porque está y estará presente en cada paso y pensamiento de aquellos que tuvimos la dicha de conocerlo. Hasta siempre "Viejo."

### **Viola Salgado & family**

I have years of personal memories of Viejo as do many others and most of us remember him from similar experiences. I remember meeting Viejo and Alejandrina about 30 years ago, visiting each other, his daughters and my daughters riding bikes, sleep overs in Oak Park, celebrating birthdays, when my son was born, church, camping, and all kinds of fun things. The undeniable memories of Viejo was his spirit of struggle for an independent Puerto Rico and solidarity for social justice. Viejo expressed this to his friends, church and enemy alike, whoever he came in contact with. Last but certainly not least, Viejo persevered with unconditional love and support for the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners especially for his loving wife, Alejandrina and family. Viejo took on the role of a responsible single parent of two young daughters ( 1983 ), as he waited for Alejandrina to come home from prison in 1999. Regretfully, Viejo's son, Carlos, Haydee Beltrán and Oscar López are not home yet, but Viejo's spirit of struggle continues in all of us.

### **Felix Shafer**

I just saw the email of Viejo, Rev. Torre's passing. Please convey gentle and passionate solidarity from Miranda and Gemma-who was quite moved with memories of him last night when I told her-

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and of course from me whose tears are full with his inspiration for a Free Puerto Rico and a revolutionary world. I will never forget him as long as I love.

### **Capitulo Jericho de Boston**

El capítulo de Jericho de la ciudad de Boston le extiende nuestro más sentido pésame al compañero Carlos Alberto Torres y a su familia por la pérdida de su querido padre. Sepan que en estos momentos de dolor estamos pensando en ustedes y que a pesar de no poder acompañarles físicamente, sí lo estamos en espíritu. Nuestra lucha por la libertad es grande y con determinación y entusiasmo la antorcha de la solidaridad nos iluminará el camino. Con nuestro espíritu solidario le enviamos un abrazo y mucha fortaleza en estos tiempos difíciles.

### **Leslie Mullin**

With many fond thoughts of Reverend "Viejo" Torres, for whom prison walls were never a deterrent. With courage and humor, he fought tirelessly for justice and for the release of the Puerto Rican POWs. He enthusiastically embraced everyone who worked alongside him. In San Francisco, I remember Viejo telling hilarious stories of sneaking bacalaítos fritos into the prisoners. Behind the humor was his resolve to sustain loved ones buried behind those walls, and to do everything in his power to encourage and support them. My thoughts and condolences to Alejandrina, to his family, and to the community and movement he nourished.

### **Rose Maria Arrieta**

It's sad about Viejo. I will always remember being in the car with him and with Noemi and I forget who else and we were on Van Ness coming back from some tourist trap, and God only knows why we went, but anyway all of them were singing 'Carmen' ( the opera version ). This is how I remember Viejo - laughing, willing to do anything and not afraid to give. Un abrazo fuerte.

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## **Rev. José A Torres Passes Away at the Age 82: A Community Titan has Fallen: The Struggle Continues, With One Shoulder Less**

Our Puerto Rican community mourns the death of Reverend Jose A. Torres, who died on Saturday, February 5 at 5pm in his Humboldt Park home. On Tuesday, February 8, an emotional and solemn memorial service took place. The service was held at the church in which he became the first Latino pastor, the same church he directed for decades. Hundreds of friends and family members filled the church to capacity. The community paid its last respects to a titan of our community struggles and our fight for the redemption of our homeland.

Rev. Torres, better known as "El Viejo" among his disciples and family members, truly lived out the legacy of his name. The elders of our Taino ancestors were the shamans, wise ones, were those who were able to manifest the dialogue between the natural and the supernatural; those were the Bohites.

Rev. Jose Alberto Torres "El Viejo" was born on June 9, 1923 in Ponce, Puerto Rico. He completed his academic and theological studies in 1949, at the Interamerican University in San German and the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico. In 1959, Rev. Torres was called by the Congregational Church in New York to work with the Spanish-speaking community at Martha Memorial Evangelical and Reformed Church in Manhattan. In 1962, Rev. Torres was called by the Community Renewal Society of Chicago to minister the growing Hispanic community at the First Congregational Church of Chicago. In those days the church was located on Ashland and Washington, an area demographically composed of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and African Americans, and was later moved to its present location at 1305 N. Hamlin. During that time, Rev. Torres was interim director of Casa Central and an active participant of the Urban Training Center, two entities that were housed and supported by the First Congregational Church of Chicago. In 1990, Rev. Torres retired and was officially granted the status of Pastor Emeritus by the First Congregational Church of Chicago.

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Rev. Torres was instrumental in enlisting the support of the Church on issues that were affecting the Puerto Rican community at the time. These issues ranged from residential displacement as a result of the Urban Renewal project, to better housing, education, employment, community rights, and representation in local politics. Also, he was one of the pioneers in the struggle for bilingual education and the creation of several schools named after esteemed Puerto Rican figures, such as Jose de Diego and Roberto Clemente.

Since his involvement with the United Church of Christ, First Church has actively participated in the struggles surrounding civil and human rights issues of the Puerto Rican community and other under represented minority communities. Rev. Torres marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Alabama in 1964, and was part of a group of ministers that brought Dr. King's civil rights issues to First Church. He has worked diligently for social justice in various aspects of the community. He was on the organizing committee of the first Puerto Rican Parade and the Peoples' Parade. He was a founding member of the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School, the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center, and the National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War.

For many years, Rev. Torres was a militant participant in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. He was a close and personal friend of Independentista leaders, such as Andres Figueroa Cordero, Oscar Collazo, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores, William Morales, Oscar Lopez-Rivera, Dra. Loida Figueroa and Lolita Lebrón, among others.

Rev. Torres married Alejandrina (Alex) in 1964; they had two children together, Liza and Catalina. He also had three children from a previous marriage, Carlos Alberto (who's currently one of the remaining political prisoners), Norma, and Nidza.

Rev. Torres found many sons and daughters in the First Church community, all of whom were considered a very close part of his family.

There are so many things that "El Viejo" was a part of; we know well that these efforts and the struggle itself will continue, but as our revered poet Consuelo Lee Corretjer once wrote, it will be "with one shoulder less."

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