

# PUERTO RICO: SHOWCASE OF OPPRESSION

## CULTURAL IDENTITY VS. CULTURAL INVASION



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## INTRODUCTION

### *The Effect of Americanization on Puerto Rican Culture: Influence, Bridge Between Two Cultures, or Cultural Aggression?*

Puerto Rico is a nation in which one out of every 50 of its inhabitants is a drug addict, where 40% of all housing is labeled "unfit for human occupation," and where there are 150,000 problem drinkers. The suicide and divorce rates are astoundingly high for a heavily Catholic nation, and the list of social evils could run on indefinitely.

There are two postures in regard to social change and social ills in Puerto Rico. One explains everything in terms of "change", which simply states that Puerto Rico is a country in transition between an agrarian culture and an industrial culture. This rationale leads into the "bridge" concept, in which Puerto Rico is seen as the intermediary between American and Latin culture. Things that would seem disastrous are shoved aside by saying that everything will calm down once the transition is made and cultural adjustments take place. Those that assume this posture are usually in favor of importing American life styles, habits, customs, education, values, etc.

The second posture is that what is occurring is not cultural adjustment but rather "transculturation", the

active displacement of Puerto Rican culture by American culture.

A section on the effects of American culture in Puerto Rico would merit a packet of its own. As representative of some of the ideas and conflicts involved, we have selected an article by the celebrated Puerto Rican academician, Dona Margot Arce de Vazquez, who many years has been professor of Hispanic studies at the University of Puerto Rico and who received the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture award in 1970 for her contributions to the cultural life of Puerto Rico.

This is followed by two papers on the role of women and, finally, the Puerto Rican "national anthem", *La Borinquena*.

The original version, written by Lola Rodríguez de Tío, was changed drastically after 1898, presumably because it was too "violent". No one protested that the American anthem sang of "bombs bursting in air".

The two versions, in both Spanish and English, are here reproduced.

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## THE TRANSCULTURATION PROCESS IN PUERTO RICO

Prof. Margot Arce de Vazquez

It would be helpful at the start to say what I understand by transculturation. It is, generally speaking, the action or effect of a cultural change. It is not influence; rather it deals with much deeper effects, like those that occur through aggression against or penetration of one culture by another. This occurs under propitious conditions, for example, colonialism, and can have grave effects on the victimized culture which can reach the point of substituting values and attitudes that will menace it with denaturalization and disappearance.

From the year 1898 until today Puerto Rican culture has suffered aggression from American culture, an inevitable aggression because of the colony-empire relationship that we have with the United States.

I would like to make clear that I believe there exists a Puerto Rican culture, though some would deny this. It is a culture with its own characteristics resulting from the

fusion of Indian, Spanish, African and Antillean elements. I consider it desirable and necessary to preserve these elements since this means nothing less than our survival as a national entity. In addition, the whole world would be the poorer if any of the elements that make up our "universal culture" were to disappear. It should also be clear that I consider the situation in which we find ourselves—that of growing American penetration of all spheres of national life—very dangerous, almost desperate, and I think the time left for us to stop it is running out.

I know I will be called a nationalist in the worst sense of the word but I don't care. I have become accustomed to the most varied and contradictory of accusations. I believe my country to be a clearly defined nation, having the right to be so. Moreover I think my country has the right to defend itself from the very real danger of losing its national character with the disappearance of its own

traits. Puerto Rican nationalism is not and could never be either aggressive or imperialistic as are the fascist states of today, precisely because its characteristics of Spanish and Christian universalism would prevent this.

For me Puerto Rican culture is like any other national culture—a well-integrated total of elements that make us a tight and indivisible living unit, founded on a community of interests, realizations, aspirations and ideals, moral norms, and value judgments. With this totality no one element can be considered “abstract”, much less autonomous or substitutable for another which is alien to the whole without the internal coherence suffering irreparable damage. This seems very clear to me, above all in the more spiritual components of the culture: the concept and composition of the family, human relationships, beliefs, values, arts, language, law, moral standards.

In his book\*, German de Granda traces the history of Puerto Rico showing the transformations the country has suffered from 1898 to 1968. He divides the period into two parts—1898 to 1940 and 1940 to 1968. The coming to power of the Popular Democratic Party marks the division and it also determines the quickening in pace, magnitude, and depth of the process of transculturation that started with the American invasion of 1898. Since the year 1944 the whole community has been affected by cultural aggression except for the intellectual humanist elite and what remains of the coffee and tobacco subcultures. Granda describes how the intellectual humanist elite is relatively untouched by the process:

*When the new values enter the intellectual realms of those affected by the transculturation process and the old are displaced there results a psychological trauma of vast and tragic consequences, both psychologically and socially. Its cause is very clear. There is an attempt on the part of the affected person to reformulate his basic personality by trying to adopt new values from a “source” which is not his. On the other hand he will attempt to reject the original values and substitute for them the new or imposed ones. Neither purpose is accomplished to any great degree without there resulting a feeling of double personality, loneliness, and mental as well as affective bewilderment that can and often does lead to more profound and tragic disturbances.*

*At the personal level there can predominate feelings of personal disvalue and inferiority in regards to the invading culture, attitudes of apathy and discontent or escapism and frustration. In external conduct, before the social disorganization following the collapse of the former norms of conduct that have yet to be fully substituted for the new ones in a harmonious way, one*

\*Transculturación e Interferencia Lingüística en el Puerto Rico Contemporáneo, 1898-1968.

*can note the collective symptoms of abundant mental illness, delinquent conduct, the fleeing to the world of drugs or to religions of spiritualistic or fundamentalist tendencies that have heavy elements of magic and emotionalism and, finally, the high suicide rate.*

The spheres of conduct and values are not spared from this aggression. The resultant social disintegration and “anomie” plus psychological alienation are ever more apparent. Sports, love relationships, the constitution of the family, urbanism, architecture, music, celebrations, traditions, religion, and language have all been penetrated and their substance altered.

Because of my particular field I am very interested in the situation of language. Granda and I agree with the assumption that language and culture have a mutuality and that language should be considered as an integral part of life.

Since I am not a linguist I do not presume to speak technically on the subject. But my position in regard to our Spanish language is well known. It has been made public before. It is my judgment that the Spanish language is in danger in Puerto Rico at the present moment. In a colonial situation such as Puerto Rico, it is inevitable for the language of the empire to hold a position of prestige. In an economy such as ours where almost the totality of economic wealth is in the hands of American banks and businesses the use of English in commerce is inevitable. Within a middle class such as ours, newly formed and eager to acquire economic strength, with its national conscience dormant or voluntarily silenced for the sake of expediency, the imitation of American characteristics and the unconditional acceptance of English as a means of ascending socio-economic levels is inevitable. When a good number of Puerto Rican parents choose their children's schools by whether they will “learn good English” and not because they will necessarily get a good education and a solid intellectual formation, it seems to me that there is reason to fear for the future of the Spanish language in Puerto Rico.

Up to now it is relatively true that of all the spheres of national life, the language and the arts are the least touched by cultural aggression. But all the signs announce a nearing and growing danger.

I do not consider language an objective medium, substitutable or indifferent. I subscribe, rather, to the words of the eminent Romano Guardini in his book *The World and Mankind*.

*Man is essentially directed to dialogue; his spiritual life is orientated towards communication. Spiritual life becomes reality essentially through language. Language is not simply a means of communicating facts while*

*talking. Thinking, for example, does not come about by some preverbal act of the spirit that afterwards is translated into words by some continuous decision or intention but rather from the first moment it takes the form of internal language. Language is not a system of symbols by which men enter into communication but rather the arena of the senses in which every man lives.*

If this can be said of language in general and of its functions in the spiritual and inner lives of men, what can be said about the language we have heard since the cradle and have spoken our first word, the language that has been the "arena of the senses" in which we as well as our ancestors have lived and has therefore formed our thinking, sentiments, sensibilities, values and at the same time been formed by them? Can we imagine what it would mean to the integral life of every person—and a whole national community—to substitute that language, that "arena of the senses", for another language that is totally alien, that would mean a total interior adaptation?

We all know that there are no absolute synonyms, that it is not the same to say *mother* and *madre* because the words are charged with affective connotations as well as evaluation and social meanings that are different and subtle in significant nuances. To abandon one's language is no simple thing because, as Granda has said, it implies an interior modification of the individual that can very well result in the loss of his spiritual and mental balance.

To Puerto Rican writers, it is important to what measure their natural medium of expression is affected; in extreme cases it could even mean the extinction of their creative talents. Julien Green, Jacques Maritain and Juan Ramon Jimenez have left us very expressive testimonies of their experiences in having to write in another language or of having to live in another country with a foreign linguistic medium where contact with their own living native language was lost. Juan Ramon Jimenez thought that he would end in complete sterility. Julien Green and Jacques Martain felt vividly the anguish of knowing that every word, mode and verbal construction of the other language that seeped into their own writing or speaking was cutting away an essential part of their being.

Another consequence of transculturation that interests me personally is the displacement of the intelligentsia of humanistic and literary circles into "marginal groups" in today's Puerto Rican society which has become industrialized and technological. These intellectuals lack influence in society; they are not heard. Perhaps this fact is not so far removed from the situation of language. Is it that today's Puerto Rican society does not understand or does not care to understand its writers and artists? Let us hear what Granda has to say about this phenomenon:

*They are forced by their analytical and critical formation away from the ideals of the majority of the*

*people of the North-American type. Not possessing any fidelity toward the consumer society and on the contrary possessing the capacity to demythologize surrounding reality and present it in its true sad nature, it is no wonder that they are rejected by the emergent new middle class that tries to ridicule their attitudes, drown their voice and minimize their opinion.*

I ask myself, Has the voice of those intellectuals become the echo of an accusing conscience that must be silenced at any costs? Perhaps the most disturbing of all aspects of transculturation that is "Americanization" is its voluntary nature, that it is desired by many Puerto Ricans blinded by the sparkle of an opulent society and the possession of material wealth.

Much of Puerto Rican society thinks of its writers and humanistic intellectuals as idealists, foolish and impractical, hostile to the "modern". In the worst of cases they are treated and called, without second thought, as Communists, subversives and revolutionaries. Today the intellectual and "independentista" groups are the only voices of protest heard in our land, warning us against transculturation. But their numerous writings remain largely ineffective when they find no response in a society so blind it does not see and so deaf it does not want to hear.

Along with this marginalization of intellectuals there is another phenomenon that I think is resultant from the transculturation process to which we are subject. Our society had distinguished itself in the past by possessing genuinely Christian and Democratic attitudes, a deep respect for the human person, tolerance of ideological differences, a loyal and human life style, and an absence of prejudice. For a time now we have noticed a languishing of these positive virtues. They have become displaced by totalitarian attitudes and conduct, intolerance, fanaticism, disrespect for dissidents, the use of defamation, paid and free betrayal, and lying without scruple. This is becoming an exercise in moral violence much more pernicious than physical violence, and a deep contradiction in a society claiming to be Christian and a model of Democracy. It corresponds exactly to the phenomenon observed in American society that has been denounced by the admirable intellectual minority of that society; now it seems to have reached us by contamination or imitation. If we are to imitate anyone, why not the heroes of good causes—such as Martin Luther King—that American society in its blindness and intransigence has coldly sacrificed? Have we lost our capacity to distinguish values? Shall we let ourselves be conquered by a totalitarian and dehumanizing capitalist society? We Puerto Ricans have an obligation to reflect seriously on this problem and to do something about it.

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*It has been observed in the experiences of all liberation movements that the success of a revolution depends on the extent to which women take part in it.*

(Lenin, 1919)

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PUERTO RICO'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Carmen Eneida Parrilla

To be a woman is beautiful if we think of the duties, responsibilities and roles we have as mothers, wives and "companeras" with man. But to be a woman in a capitalist society is not beautiful nor is it easy.

There have been, since the beginning of the world, women rulers, priestesses, poets, musicians, actresses, lawyers, scientists, women workers and guerrillas. The names stand out: Gabriela Mistral, Indira Gandhi, Madame Curie, Joan of Arc, Celia Sanchez, Tania . . .

There are women in business and economic affairs, teachers, doctors and engineers. But these are really the few. What has happened to the rest of the women around the earth? Not much. They have been assigned to the pre-determined roles of mother and wife.

With the political, cultural and socio-economic changes that are today taking place we see variations in woman's function, in her condition and role.

In Puerto Rico, things have been changing for women since the end of the 19th century. Puerto Rican women have been playing an important role in our history as both followers and leaders. Among the most important Taino Indian "caciques" in Borinquen in 1493, there was a woman chief, Yuisa of Jaymanio (Loiza). During the Lares Revolt of 1868 there were numberless women who followed, stimulated, cared, and, with their love and tenderness, helped the cause of liberation. We will never get to know or name them all. There are hundreds of anonymous women who behaved as real women on behalf of their Fatherland and their people. Among others, there were: dona Ana Martinez Pumarejo, dona Obdulia Serrano, Eduvigis Beauchamp, dona Celia Brogau, dona Josefa Mendez, Conrada and Isabel Serrano, Maria Laborde, Sandalia Cardona, Rosa Medina, Petra Bruckman, Dolores Cos, Antonia Pesante, . . . wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of the revolutionaries.

One of the best known was Mariana Bracetti, wife of the rebel Miguel Rojas, who sewed the Lares flag. In Dr. Rivera de Alvarado's words, "Mariana, undaunted behind the bars of the Arecibo jail, in advanced state of pregnancy, withstanding birth pains to give forth her son, could easily be the living symbol of the resurgence of a liberated nation erecting itself on the pedestal of broken chains."

There was the poet Lola Rodriguez de Tio who wrote the lyrics of the Revolutionary Anthem "La Borinquena," who suffered persecution, and was later forced into exile.

The most significant characteristic of the Lares Revolt was the heterogeneity of the group that participated in the struggle. There were peasants, landowners, rich and poor people, illiterates, professionals, soldiers, clergy, slaves, workers and foreigners demonstrating the solidarity of the oppressed people of the world.

Women kept playing their vital role in Puerto Rican life . . . and once again they said "PRESENTE" during the years 1922 through 1936, 1950, 1954. They gave the Nationalists, led by Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, demonstration of great strength and courage. There were women like Doris Torresola, Lolita Lebron, Blanca Canales who once more reaffirmed Albizu Campos' statement: "La Patria es valor y sacrificio."

These women together with their companeros participated in the Jayuya occupation, the attack on Congress in Washington, the Nationalist Revolt, and others. Some were killed, persecuted and some are still in prison.

Nor can we mention the many hundreds of Puerto Rican women who, in one way or another, related to the Nationalists or any Puerto Rican Revolutionary; the unfaltering example of the great majority of those women will never be recognized until the Puerto Rican people achieve their socio-political, economic and psychological independence and start re-writing their own history. There are details and facts that we do not know because the Puerto Rican history has been twisted in favor of imperialist interests. We will find out someday.

Lenin was right when he said that the issue of liberating women "is not a matter of law". Today in Puerto Rico, women "supposedly" have the same rights as men. Since 1933 women have the power of voting in political elections. This came out of the innumerable demonstrations and groups that Puerto Rican women organized. In 1971 they formed the Liga Femenina Puertorriquena led by Ana Roque de Duprey, a teacher who later founded (1925) the Asociacion Puertorriquena de Mujeres Sufragistas. These groups lacked one thing: the

integration of working women into their ranks.

Women are expected to be women. They are raised as girls to be either wives and mothers or, for the few, professionals. They are expected to keep their virginity until marriage. (This is not the same for man). They are expected to have a successful marriage, which means for the rest of their life, since divorcees are not completely accepted by society. They are expected to be supported by their husbands despite the fact that many women now work outside the home. More than 50% of the manufacturing workers in Puerto Rico are women. Of a total of 138,700 workers in manufacturing industries in 1970, 69,200 were women. But women received lower wages than males for the same work. Why, if women are legally equal to men, are they not treated so in practice? Women, in Puerto Rican culture, are to be supported, directed and protected by men. But things are changing and they will continue to change.

There is now more consciousness among Puerto Rican women about their roles, duties and responsibilities than ever. They realize that in order to achieve their liberation they do not have to fight against man; their inferiority and exploitation is caused by capitalism of which man is but another victim.

Many women are studying, learning and acting because of their new conscience. At the present time women are

integrated into the Puerto Rican liberation movement as group leaders, organizers, newspaperwomen, writers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, economists, sociologists, social workers, poets, students, and above all working women.

The Puerto Rican woman is still a mother and a wife. However, she is able to combine both things with her responsibility to the Fatherland and the struggle for liberation.

The next generation should bring more energy and dynamism to the struggle. The 21st Century woman, the *new* woman, will be more aware of her role expectations. She will be able to fulfill completely her part as student, worker, mother, wife, and be an example of abnegation, courage and integrity for the family and society.

The New Woman will see her role of collaborator, co-leader, in a word, *companera* with men, as something natural and unaffected.

She will realize that we must practice *real* and not the *formal* equality.

Yesterday we had Mariana Bracetti, Lola Rodriguez, Rosalina Roura, Julia de Burgos . . . Now we have Lolita Lebron, Blanca Canales, and thousands of women working for liberation. We had an Antonia Martinez . . . Tomorrow we will have more Antonias, more, more and more . . .

Together, man and woman will stand, fight, build and die if necessary for Puerto Rican liberation.

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#### Young Lords Party

### POSITION PAPER ON WOMEN

(Excerpts)

Puerto Rican, Black, and other Third World (colonized) women are becoming more aware of their oppression in the past and today. They are suffering three different types of oppression under capitalism. First, they are oppressed as Puerto Ricans or Blacks. Second, they are oppressed as women. Third, they are oppressed by their own men. The Third World woman becomes the most oppressed person in the world today.

Economically, Third World women have always been used as a cheap source of labor and as sexual objects. Puerto Rican and Black women are used to fill working class positions in factories, mass assembly lines, hospitals and all other institutions. Puerto Rican and black women are paid lower wages than whites and kept in the lowest positions within the society. At the same time, giving Puerto Rican and Black women jobs means the Puerto Rican and Black man is kept from gaining economic independence, and the family unit is broken down. Capitalism defines manhood according to money and

status; the Puerto Rican and Black man's manhood is taken away by making the Puerto Rican and Black woman the breadwinner. This situation keeps the Third World man divided from his woman. The Puerto Rican and Black man either leaves the household or he stays and becomes economically dependent on the woman, undergoing psychological damage. He takes out all of his frustrations on his woman, beating her, repressing and limiting her freedom. Because this society produces these conditions, our major enemy is capitalism rather than our own oppressed man.

Third World Women have an integral role to play in the liberation of all oppressed people as well as in the struggle for the liberation of women. Puerto Rican and Black women make up over half of the revolutionary army, and in the struggle for national liberation they must press for the equality of women; the woman's struggle is the revolution within the revolution. Puerto Rican women will be neither behind nor in front of their brothers but

always alongside them in mutual respect and love.

#### THE DOUBLE STANDARD, MACHISMO, SEX FASCISM

Capitalism sets up standards that are applied differently to Puerto Rican and Black men from the way they are applied to Puerto Rican and Black women. These standards are also applied differently to Third World peoples than they are applied to whites. These standards must be understood since they are created to divide oppressed people in order to maintain an economic system that is racist and oppressive.

Puerto Rican and Black men are looked upon as rough, athletic and sexual, but not as intellectuals. Puerto Rican women are not expected to know anything except about the home, kitchen and bedroom. All that they are expected to do is look pretty and add a little humor. The Puerto Rican man sees himself as superior to his woman, and his superiority, he feels, gives him license to do many things—curse, drink, use drugs, beat women, and run around with many women. As a matter of fact these things are considered natural for a man to do, and he must do them to be considered a man. A woman who curses, drinks, and runs around with a lot of men is considered dirty scum, crazy, and a whore.

Today Puerto Rican men are involved in a political movement. Yet the majority of their women are home taking care of the children. The Puerto Rican sister that involves herself is considered aggressive, castrating, hard and unwomanly. She is viewed by the brothers as sexually accessible because what else is she doing outside of the home. The Puerto Rican man tries to limit the woman's role because they feel the double standard is threatened; they feel insecure without it as a crutch.

Machismo has always been a very basic part of Latin American and Puerto Rican culture. Machismo is male chauvinism and more. Machismo means "mucho macho" or a man who puts himself selfishly at the head of everything without considering the woman. He can do whatever he wants because his woman is an object with certain already defined roles—wife, mother, and good woman.

Machismo means physical abuse, punishment and torture. A Puerto Rican man will beat his woman to keep her in place and show her who's boss. Most Puerto Rican men do not beat women publicly because in the eyes of other men that is a weak thing to do. So they usually wait until they're home. All the anger and violence of centuries of oppression which should be directed against the oppressor is directed at the Puerto Rican woman. The aggression is also directed at daughters. The daughters hear their fathers saying "the only way a woman is going to do anything or listen is by hitting her." The father applies this to the daughter, beating her so that she can learn "respeto." The daughters grow up with messed up

attitudes about their role as women and about manhood. They grow to expect that men will always beat them.

Sexual fascists are very sick people. Their illness is caused in part by this system which mouths puritanical attitudes and laws and yet exploits the human body for profit.

Sexual Fascism is tied closely to the double standard and machismo. It means that a man or woman thinks of the opposite sex solely as sexual objects to be used for sexual gratification and then discarded. Sexual fascists do not consider people's feelings; they will use any rap, especially political, to get sex.

#### PROSTITUTION

Under capitalism, Third World women are forced to compromise themselves because of their economic situation. The fact that her man cannot get a job and that the family is dependent on her for support means she hustles money by any means necessary. Black and Puerto Rican sisters are put into a situation where jobs are scarce or nonexistent and are forced to compromise body, mind, and soul; they are then called whores or prostitutes.

Puerto Rican and Black sisters are made to prostitute themselves in many other ways. The majority of these sisters on the street are also hard-core drug addicts, taking drugs as an escape from oppression. These sisters are subjected to sexual abuse from dirty old men who are mainly white racists who view them as the ultimate sexual objects. The sisters also suffer abuse from the pimps, really small-time capitalists, who see the women as private property that must produce the largest possible profit.

Because this society controls and determines the economic situation of Puerto Rican and Black women, sisters are forced to take jobs at the lowest wages; at the same time take insults and other indignities in order to keep the job. In factories, our men are worked like animals and cannot complain because they will lose their jobs—their labor is considered abundant and cheap. In hospitals, our women comprise the majority of the nurse's aides, kitchen workers, and clerks. These jobs are unskilled, the pay is low, and there is no chance for advancement. In offices, our positions are usually as clerks, typists and no-promotion jobs. In all of these jobs, our sisters are subjected to racial slurs, jokes, and other indignities such as being leered at, manhandled, propositioned, and assaulted. Our sisters are expected to prostitute themselves and take abuse of any kind or lose these subsistence jobs.

Everywhere our sisters are turned into prostitutes. The most obvious example is the sisters hustling their bodies

on the streets, but the other forms of prostitution are also types of further exploitation of the Third World woman. The only way to eliminate prostitution is to eliminate this society which creates the need. Then we can establish a socialist society that meets the economic needs of all the people.

### THREE ROADS TO GENOCIDE

We have no control over our bodies, because capitalism finds it necessary to control the woman's body to control population size. The choice of motherhood is being taken out of the mother's hands. She is sterilized to prevent her from having children, or she has to have a child because she cannot get an abortion.

Third World sisters are caught up in a complex situation. On one hand, we feel that genocide is being committed against our people. We know that Puerto Ricans will not be around on the face of the earth very long if Puerto Rican women are sterilized at the rate they are being sterilized now. The practice of sterilization in Puerto Rico goes back to the 1930's when doctors pushed it as the only means of contraception. In 1947-48, 7% of the women were sterilized; between 1953-54, 4 out of every 25; and by 1965, the number had increased to about 1 out of every 3 women. In many cases our sisters are told that their tubes are going to be "tied," but are never told that the "tying" is really "cutting" and that the tubes can never be "untied."

Part of this genocide is also the use of birth control pills which were tested for 15 years on Puerto Rican sisters (guinea pigs) before being sold on the market in the U.S. Even now many doctors feel that these pills cause cancer and death from blood clotting.

Abortions in hospitals that are butcher shops are little better than the illegal abortions our women used to get. The first abortion death in NYC under the new abortion law was Carmen Rodriguez, a Puerto Rican sister who died in Lincoln Hospital. Her abortion was legal, but the conditions in the hospital were deadly.

On the other hand, we believe that abortions should be legal if they are community controlled, if they are safe, if our people are educated about the risks and if doctors do not sterilize our sisters while performing abortions. We realize that under capitalism our sisters and brothers cannot support large families and the more children we have the harder it is to support them. We say, change the system so that women can freely be allowed to have as many children as they want without suffering any consequences.

### DAY CARE CENTERS

One of the main reasons why many sisters are tied to the home and cannot work or become revolutionaries is the shortage of day care centers for children. The centers that already exist are over-crowded, expensive, and are

only super-baby-sitting centers. Day care centers should be free, should be open 24 hours a day, and should be centers where children are taught their revolutionary history and culture.

Many sisters leave their children with a neighbor, or the oldest child is left to take care of the younger ones. Sometimes they are left alone, and all of us have read the tragic results in the newspapers of what happens to children left alone—they are burned to death in fires, or they swallow poison, or fall out of windows to their death.

### REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN

Throughout history, women have participated and been involved in liberation struggles. But the writers of history have never given full acknowledgment to the role of revolutionary women. At the point of armed struggle for national liberation, women have proved themselves as revolutionaries.

MARIANA BRACETTI was a Puerto Rican woman who together with her husband fought in the struggle for independence in Lares. She was called "el brazo de oro" because of her unlimited energy. For her role in the struggle, she was imprisoned. She sewed the first flag of El Grito de Lares.

Another nationalist woman was LOLA RODRIGUEZ DE TIO, a poet who expressed the spirit of liberty and freedom to "La Borinquena" in 1867. Besides being a nationalist, she was a fighter for women's rights. She refused to conform to the traditional customs concerning Puerto Rican women and at one point cut her hair very short.

BLANCA CANALES was one of the leaders of the revolution in Jayuya in 1950.

LOLITA LEBRON, together with three other patriots, opened fire on the House of Representatives in an armed attack in 1954, bringing the attention of the world on the colonial status of Puerto Rico. She emptied a .45 automatic from the balcony of the Congress on to the colonial legislators. She then draped herself in the Puerto Rican flag and cried "Viva Puerto Rico Libre." The result was 5 legislators shot, and one critically wounded. She was imprisoned in a federal penitentiary and sentenced to 50 years. She is still in prison for this heroic act of nationalism.

Only recently, a 19 year old coed, ANTONIA MARTINEZ, was killed in Puerto Rico in a demonstration against the presence of amerikkkan military recruiting centers. She was murdered when she yelled "Viva Puerto Rico Libre!"

SOJOURNER TRUTH was born a slave in New York around 1800. She traveled in the north speaking out against slavery, and for women's rights. She was one of the most famous black orators in history.

KATHLEEN CLEAVER is a member of the Central

