



Written by on January 5, 2011

NYC Councilwoman Asks Colleagues to Support Absolving Convicted Terrorist

A member of the New York City Council is calling upon her colleagues to support absolving a convicted terrorist.

Councilwoman Melissa Mark Viverito, a Democrat, circulated a petition last week calling upon her colleagues to support granting parole to Oscar Lopez-Rivera, a leader of the violent paramilitary group Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación National (FALN), which calls for armed conflict in advocating for Puerto Rican independence, as an ideological heir to the Puerto Rican “Nationalistas,” who used violence in their attempts to establish Puerto Rican independence. To date, Viverito claims that “six or seven” other councilpersons have signed on to the petition.



Rivera is currently serving a 70-year term for numerous charges, including seditious conspiracy, weapons violations, and conspiracy to transport explosives with intent to destroy government property, due to his role in orchestrating 120 bombings aimed at American targets from 1974–1983. He was convicted in Chicago in 1981, along with ten other FALN ringleaders, including some who received sentences of up to 90 years for a wide range of illegal activities, including possession of unregistered firearms, interstate transportation of a stolen vehicle, and interference with interstate commerce by violence and interstate transportation of firearms with intent to commit a crime. Rivera is currently imprisoned in a federal maximum security facility in Florence, Colorado, and was given an additional 15 years in 1988 for conspiracy to escape, following a failed jailhouse escape attempt.

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He is also depicted in a mural in Viverito’s neighborhood along with convicted felon Avelino Gonzalez Claudio, sponsored by the “[Patriots of Resistance](#)” program of the East Harlem [Julia de Burgos Cultural Center](#), named after a Nationalist, and funded through taxpayer funds from the NYC Economic Development Corporation and Department of Cultural Affairs. Claudio, a member of FALN-affiliate Los Macheteros (“The Machete-Wielders,” also known as the Boricua Popular Army) was best known for his role in the infamous armed [robbery of an armored Wells-Fargo truck](#) in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1985, which — at the time — was the largest cash heist in U.S. history. A minimum of approximately \$2-\$3 Million of the stolen money was funneled to Communist Cuba through their embassy in Mexico City by a member of the Macheteros.

Rivera’s terrorist activities are the culmination of a [lifelong history of leftist activism](#) in his hometown of Chicago. He was a founder of the Rafael Cancel Miranda High School in Chicago, now named after Don Pedro Albizu Campos. Like Barack Obama, he was also a leading Chicago “community organizer,” and helped establish the Northwest Community Organization (NCO), a group known for its protest



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strategies, and its efforts to advocate for security rights and secure federally subsidized mortgages for community members, the same type of activity which ACORN engaged in, contributing to the country's financial meltdown.

Rivera's organization also "received critical assistance" from the Industrial Areas Foundation (<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/909.html>), the national community organizing network established in 1940 by Saul Alinsky, author of *Rules for Radicals* and recipient of the Roman Catholic Pacem In Terris Award, who trained both Rivera and Obama. Rivera's NCO also had the support of over two dozen Roman Catholic churches in Chicago in 1961, who hoped the group would help reverse urban decay, and would later comprise the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#), which Obama worked for as a community organizer in the 1980s and 1990s.

Both Miranda and Campos were leaders in the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, and like Rivera, they leave behind a long legacy of violence and civil unrest. Miranda, along with three other terrorists, entered the US Capitol Building with automatic pistols and fired 30 shots on March 1, 1954, injuring five congressmen. This terrorist attack was the predecessor to later attacks carried out by Rivera and his comrades. According to an interview conducted in the socialist newspaper, [The Militant](#), Miranda was also a proud draft-dodger, and refused to fight against communist North Korea, instead seeking refuge in Cuba (he was expelled under the Batista regime, but later offered readmission by Castro).

Rivera's other idol, Campos, was leader and president of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party from 1930 until his death in 1965, and was arrested twice, first in 1935 and then in 1950, for his role in violent anti-US activity. He was defended only by the ACLU and Congressman Vito Marcantonio, who believed that the 1937 trial of Campos and other "Nationalists" was biased. In his 1939 speech *Five Years of Tyranny*, Marcantonio chastised Puerto Rican Governor Blanton Winship and expressed his solidarity with the aims of Campos, arguing that Campos and his ilk are victims of systematic American oppression. Incidentally, Marcantonio, originally a Republican, later served in the NYC Council as a member of the American Labor Party, and opposed the Korean War as leader of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA)-linked International Workers Order, a mutual benefit society for trade unionists and CPUSA members.

Other Communists to serve in the New York City Council include Marcantonio's contemporary, Benjamin J. Davis, a member of the CPUSA and People's Party associated with Stalinist William Z. Foster, General Secretary of the CPUSA who supported the Soviet Union in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and [Miriam Friedlander](#), a Democrat whom Former Mayor Edward Koch described as "an old-time Marxist, a member of the Bronx Communist party, of which she was very proud."

Just as the communist [Marcantonio](#) advocated for the "complete and immediate unconditional pardon" of convicted terrorists in 1937, Democrat Councilwoman Viverito is advocating for the pardon of the same latter-day "Nationalists" in 2010. Ironically, Viverito represents the same district as Marcantonio in the NYC Council, Manhattan's East Harlem neighborhood, home to a historically large Hispanic and Italian community.

Like Marcantonio and Friedlander, Viverito is also a hardened leftist within the NYC Council, and is the organizing chairwoman of the new [Progressive Caucus](#) within the Council, a coalition of 12 of the Council's most liberal members, in a legislative body where 46 out of 51 members are Democrats. Many of the Progressive Caucus members are also affiliated with the ACORN-linked Working Families Party, and Viverito unabashedly says that the caucus exists because "(Mayor) Bloomberg has lost sight of the poor, working class and middle class. So yes, this is a response because we don't feel the city is going in



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the same direction as the majority wants.” Ironically, while Viverito claims that the majority opposes Bloomberg’s agenda, Bloomberg was [elected](#) to an unprecedented third term in 2009 with 50.6% of the vote.

The pro-FALN politician, according to her caucus’s [statement of principles](#), supports gay marriage and abortion rights, giving the Civilian Complaint and Review Board prosecutorial authority (just like Newark, NJ’s People’s Organization for Progress, which recently [politicized the murder](#) of an innocent college student) and granting to [illegal aliens voting rights](#) and “full municipal privileges and responsibilities.”

Viverito is not the only Democrat to support granting amnesty to convicted FALN terrorists. On August 11, 1999, Former President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, commuted the sentences of 16 FALN members, and offered clemency under the condition that the convicted terrorists renounce violence. Lopez was offered clemency, but refused to abandon violence, and as such, voluntarily chose to serve out the remainder of his sentence. Clinton was supported in his endeavor by the [United Church of Christ](#), the denomination with which Barack Obama identifies, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Puerto Rico, Luis Aponte Rodriguez, [Former President Jimmy Carter](#), South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and [John Cardinal O’Connor](#), the head of the Archdiocese of New York, who supports the canonization of socialist pacifist Dorothy Day, head of the Catholic Worker Movement.

In addition, while Clinton was condemned by Congress (which enjoyed a Republican majority in both the House and the Senate), he did have the support of liberal Democrat Senators Daniel Akaka of Hawaii and the late Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, neither of whose states have significant Puerto Rican populations (neither of these states has a significant Puerto Rican population, according to [statistical data](#)). Clinton was opposed by the FBI, the US Attorney’s Office, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the over 90 victims and families of FALN terrorism, as well as [95 members of the U.S. Senate](#) and 331 members of the US House. All 41 House votes in favor of FALN clemency came from Democrats, including Obama’s close friends Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii and Jan Schakowsky of Illinois, Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, Maxine Waters of California, and [Robert Menendez of New Jersey](#) (the son of refugees from the anti-communist government of Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista, who came to the United States eight years prior to the 1959 Communist Revolution).

In addition, a legal defense fund established to appeal for the release of Claudio and Rivera, the [Pro Libertad Freedom Campaign](#), touts support from the offices of US Congressmen Nydia Velazquez and Jose Serrano, two New York City Democrats among the 41 who voted in support of FALN clemency.

Furthermore, the role of then-Department of Justice (DOJ) Deputy Attorney General [Eric Holder](#) in the pardon is not to be underappreciated. Holder, now the Attorney General, repeatedly pushed his subordinates at the DOJ to drop their [opposition to granting clemency to the FALN terrorists](#), one of whom, when interviewed and taped by the FBI, said “I don’t have to ask forgiveness from anybody” Despite the fact that not one of the terrorists had even requested clemency (as they view themselves as martyrs for their cause), or expressed any remorse or forgiveness to the families of those they killed or maimed, Holder instructed his staff at Justice’s Office of the Pardon Attorney to effectively replace the department’s original report recommending against any commutations, which had been sent to the White House in 1996, with one that favored clemency for at least half the prisoners, according to numerous documents and interviews.

Although Holder was warned that the decision could result in political ramifications, he nonetheless offered clemency to Rivera, who played a crucial role in numerous infamous FALN bombings, including



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the bombing of New York City's [Fraunces Tavern](#) landmark restaurant in Lower Manhattan on January 24, 1975, which killed 4 people and injured 50 others. When Holder was nominated for the position of Attorney General in 2009, Joseph Connor, the son of FALN victim Frank Connor, who was murdered at Fraunces Tavern, said "How can he (Holder) reconcile that? Why would he push for something so dangerous?"

Rivera and his FALN comrades also have an ally in the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, which has long supported the aims of the Nacionalistas and FALN. [The UN has made numerous calls for Puerto Rican independence](#), and has requested the release of "all Puerto Rican political prisoners serving sentences for cases relating to the Non-Self-Governing Territory's struggle for independence." They also rail against what they perceive as "disproportionate prison sentences handed down to Puerto Rican independence fighters in United States jails," effectively serving as the "Amen Corner" for the FALN. According to a UN Press Release, the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party serves as an effective partner of the Special Committee on Decolonization, and it was the Castro Cuban Representative to the UN who introduced the resolution calling for support for "Puerto Rico's long struggle for independence, deeply rooted in a sense of identity."

Calls to Viverito's office for comment have remained unanswered, and to date the only NYC Council member to express any objections to Viverito's request has been Councilman Daniel J. Halloran (R-Queens), also a member of the Independence, Conservative, and Libertarian Parties, who exposed the infamous [Sanitation Union mutiny of 2010](#) says that his "jaw hit the ground" when he read Viverito's email, and sent out an [email to all 51 members of the Council](#), stating, "this terrorist, like all terrorists, should rot in jail forever."

It should also be noted that the majority of Puerto Ricans do not support independence, but are in favor of statehood, recalling the honor with which many Puerto Rican patriots have served their country in war, which is also the official position of the [2008 GOP platform](#), as well as the island's [Republican Governor, Luis Fortuno, and its Democratic Congressional Delegate, Pedro Pierluisi](#).



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