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# SALVO

ISSUE # 5

SAVED BY A BARRAGE OF FIREPOWER

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- YOUNG LORDETTA'S POLITICS OF PROSTITUTION
- NOT4PROPHET SEZ THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE GANGSTA
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# JULIA DE-BURGOS



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# LETTER FROM AN EDITOR

Words can be weapons and syllables are swords; images can incite and graffiti is a gun, if written right/write.... and in crystal clear black and white. Art/anarchy is one of the few forms of communication thru agitation tools we have left in this (homeland) insecurity system(ized) status (symbol) quo, yo(!), and it is the one element that can't be controlled, contained, categorized, commercialized, consumed or co-opted by the corporate capitalist culture vultures unless we (sub)let em. So we gotta aim our salvo right (and wrong) at the tech-no-logical target(s), and drop our (mind) bombs directly on the bull(shits) eye. The system has taken away every-thing from us, so we gotta use the only things we have left.... to the left.

Assimilation is the order of the day today. Walk straight, speak (all)right, pull ya pants up please, cut ya hair (or at least wash ya dreads), and pay (close attention) to what they say, ok. But not too close. Better to listen with Van Gogh's one good ear and just pay your credit card collectors or put a quarter in the church (but not the mosque) collection plate and then sit quietly and wait, Mr.... A suit and tie (or maybe a straight jacket) is the preferred ass-imiilation attire if you wanna get hired and not (mis)fired, unless you would rather where/wear a (fire wire) tire around your neck like some strange fruit fossil fact-similack from a fascist film that fails at being fiction and feels like fact.... get back!

Outcast! Outsiders!. Outlaws! Out of bounds! Underdogs! Underlings! Undesirables! Under the gun! Salvo is a collective (battle) cry. A subversive scream. A sabotage shout. A holler from heavens hell. The last call... and response.... There is no time left to talk! There is no time left to kill. This is no time to take your time? Do you know what time it is? It's nation time!

- Not4Prophet

# PIMP THE SYSTEM



Prostitution comes in many forms. When labor is traded for the dollar there is never a fair exchange, and so we all “lay down for the man” in one position or the other and in one-way or another. So sex for money is (just one more) form of prostitution/exploitation. In this system of capitalism, where sweat gleaned from our skin is churned within a fascist system, creating cream/buttah for the rich elite to crave, like some hard drug that can never truly satisfy (them or us), an unequal exchange of labor plays out within city side-streets, club walls, and behind the doors of mansions we will never afford to live in or even enter, except through back doors. We strip naked inside these secret places, where we offer up some semblance of “sexiness” in exchange for dead presidents, simply to feed ourselves, our children, our friends or our lovers.

As long as capitalism exists, so too will prostitution, just one more hustle in a multitude of many. The sex worker is at the bottom (and the top of the bottom) of the (slavery) chain of struggle and survival. This is reality and there is no getting around it or denying it. So, as prostitutes within a system of greed, we must prepare ourselves physically and politically for the protracted war against (and within) this system, and become revolutionaries in training, in order to adequately arm ourselves against further exploitation. Our

weapons of choice must be all those that arm us with knowledge of the system we are living, surviving and struggling within; until we know the system as well as we know ourselves. In this way, we will unlock our own minds (along with our bodies) and become real and radical revolutionaries in the making.

We must be ready, willing, able and unafraid to arm ourselves with real (hands on) weapons too, so that the greedy can no longer steal from us with ease. We must carry butterfly knives and nunchakus in our cargo pockets and purses, brass knuckles in our fists, and razor blades strapped to our thighs or under our tongues. Self-defense must be gleaned, learned and taught; scour the streets for lessons in owning your walk, your space, your desire, your needs (both physical and economic), so that you know when to say no, when to say enough is enough, when to acquiesce or when to fight back.

We must form a coalition of prostitutes, street-walkers, hustlers, strippers, slingers of the trade and create networks to empower each other. As we arm ourselves to become a stronghold of sex-workers, as we fight for our rights in this system, we will build the necessary tools (and strength) to break through the system; this capitalist empire we (currently) call our home. The same skills we use to sell our tricks can be used for revolutionary causes too. That’s right. Applying lipstick, femme-ing our style, using our seductive wiles to pass through locked doors, disguising our revolutionary motives as we trick-out in heels, enables us to move through public spaces as clandestine revolutionaries. As sex-workers we know the enemy intimately. We know their weaknesses and their desires. As politicized prostitutes, we can pimp the system as we see fit. Use the “tricks of the trade” so they don’t see us coming, until it’s too late, for them. These are our styles and strategies of sex (worker) survival, stripper sabotage, street walker sedition, new age ninjas of the night.

Until we are recognized and respected for the strength it takes to simply be Boricuas in babylon and the spic street sciences that we have made and mastered to simply survive the system, we will/must be (at least) feared for the cultural cutlass tucked into the thick curls of our hair or creative carpet cutters in our cleavage.

And the next time a stranger comes calling for some of our sugar, longing for the strength in our hands that was passed down to us by the machete wielding cane cutters of our (not so long ago) past, they might pause as their desire calls, caught between the carnal sugar cane and our cultural cutlass, to consider their own place within the system, the struggle and survival. Are they the exploiters or the exploited?

As our glossed gun lips hover near their ear, our razor tongue touching their throat, they might hear some sound from the past pushing through, a rustling in the fields (of vision), and that clandestine machetero muthafucka might just force them to pay some mind to our minds, misery and militancy. With more than just money. Or else.

- YoungLordette

## REVOLUTIONARY BUT NOT GANGSTA



(RBNG): The revolution will not be gangsterized

"Shut up... and listen! The big-time, bad-ass Cobras. Pumpin' away at the Pigs from the rooftops during the riots last summer? Oh, yeah! I know what ya's into. With .22 rifles and pistols did about as much damage as a mosquito to a elephant's ass! What did you expect to hit from that range, with those weapons at night? You might as well as thrown the damned pieces at the Pigs! You really wanna mess with Whitey? I can show you how. I can show you how!"  
- from The Spook Who Sat by the Door

"I don't want it near schools. I don't want it sold to children! In my city, we'd keep the traffic in the Dark People, the Coloreds they're animals anyway, so let them lose their souls"  
- from The Godfather

"You know what capitalism is? Gettin' fucked!"  
- from Scarface

The revolutionary struggle/la lucha can't be measured based on economics and where you (seem to be) at on the so called social

ladder/scale, or how much of the american pie you've managed to snatch off the window sill while uncle sam wasn't watching. To begin judging the struggle/la lucha (and where it's at) based on what cha got or what others don't, is also to risk falling into the capitalist trap of believing that "la victoria" that Che spoke of is one based on acquisitions, possessions, merchandise, stuff, crap and more junk. "Who evas got the most toys wins" only applies to armies and THEIR toys are real weapons aimed at us. But even that theory has been disproved (here and abroad) by your average ghetto guerilla with an attitude on more than one occasion. Furthermore, we shall overcome didn't mean that we should be overcome by possessions. You are NOT what you own, and it don't matter how low ya chain hangs either, so anyone with even an ounce of revolutionary reasoning at some point has gotta put down the sears (sucker) black and white catalogue and pick up full (and in living) color Fanon and Freire... The revolution should not be merchandised, manu-fractured or marketed by MTV, Microsoft, McDonalds or the mob.

In the u.s. the homeless still tend to be black. The unemployed (and under-employed), the drop outs/miseducated/uneducated, the diseased and dying, the prisoners and parolees, the kids slanging on the corner to make a few dead presidents (for/from the white man who brought the drugs into the ghetto in the first place), the disempowered, disenfranchised, the outcast, the hated. The Black people. So, if ya can't play b-ball, box or B-boy, ain't nowhere to go but down (and out). So this 400 -plus year policy/history/reality pushes our people into a vicious cycle of ghettover-gangsta-hustle-criminal-culture and a starvation-slave-wage survival of the slickest stance. And that modern day MOB (money over bitches) mentality will follow you wherever you go and becomes all that you know, infecting your intellect and eventually becomes your clique-credo that can't be removed any easier then a big bad tattoo. It trails you like a slum shadow, everywhere and anywhere, as near as the american nightmare underworld or as far as the tel-i-vision dream world. The ghetto-life and the gangsta culture that has been bred by it is not a glass ceiling that can be measured by how big (or small) your pay check is. It is a buy or steal/steel barbed-wire sky, with concertina walls, where the only thing you pay (or receive) in the end is last respects.... and eventually your life becomes all about the hustle.

This live-and-let-die lifestyle and syndicate-struggle stance breeds (and is encouraged and magnified by our consumerist capitalist classists society) a new (name)brand of Black man, the "gangsta" who will do anything to get anything. Even addict, abuse, accuse or use our own (Black) family.....

This is the "gang culture" that we are dealing with in these (troubled) times. In the beginning, most cats/kids become bangers and slangers on the street not because they want money (necessarily), but because they want protection/family/respect/survival/a name/a voice/a face, within a ghetto existence/reality. But in this amerikan society, respect, a name, a voice and a face means acquiring what you don't have (or need) at any cost, and survival means getting what you don't have at all cost. But since there ain't a legitimate job to be had in the hood (unless ya know which button to push for the fries at McDonalds), or a real school ta teach ya ('less ya lucky enough to get bussed to they other schools), and not a real revolutionary to school ya anyway (cuz they all in jail or dead or addicted), and ain't a future for far and wide, then all ya got is "gangsta". Gangsta becomes the refuge from the slum, the escape from New York (or Compton or North Philli, or motor city, or chocolate city, whateva shitty ya livin in), the A grade against the shitstem that failed you. So, "Gangsta" starts out as the only forse-able answer (and future) for poverty's housing project public enemies.

BUT, "gangsta" or the "THUG LIFE" is not a "revolution" or revolutionary and won't get us any closer to really overturning this anti-nigga machine. Certainly not in the sense that anyone who studies or has been in an actual revolution would define it. Sure, we could take the word revolution and twist and re-shape it (just like the word pimp) and make it mean whatever we want it to as it suits us (or them), but that still wouldn't make "gangsterism" the same as any revolution that we have ever thought of as a real revolution (Cuba, Algeria, Zimbabwe, France, the u.s., Russia, Nicaragua, China, El Salvador, anywhere). To try to suggest that it is would certainly have Che, Cienfuegos, Mao, Malcolm, Pedro Albizu Campos, Filiberto Ojeda Rios, Kuwasi Balagoon, Carlos Marighella, Kwame Toure, Kwame Nkruma, Patrice Lumumba, Martin Sostre, and the rest of the real rebelutionary pantheon rolling over in their rebel paupers

graves. Yeah, revolution IS Bloody, and bloody violent too. But the violence is not supposed to be directed at ya own. Unless, of course, you see your own as the enemy. In which case, fire away..... of course, that can work both ways, and at some point your "enemy" may start firing back....

Unfortunately, the Black struggle has not made a successful revolution in amerika just yet. The revolution has been in effect, but the masses are not yet sufficiently armed or organized. The "slave" uprisings, civil rights struggles, Black/PR/Chicano/native Nationalist movement(s), and, i would argue, even the so called "Hip Hop nation" have (in there own way) brought us closer to that reality (in the past) in different but quite real ways, but none achieved Black Power (and what that really means/entails for us) in the end. If they had, then there would be no need (in this century) for Black people to still be pimping/exploiting and/or selling out themselves to the (white supremacist) shitstem in order to sweep up some of its crumbs and eat some of its left over left overs. Today, minstrel is the modern-day militant.....

Gangsterism has never been positive for the people. That just ain't its nature. It automatically entails using/exploiting anyone and everyone that you have to, including your own (in whatever ways



you can) in order to get a piece of the devil's pie. Sure, there have been instances of gangs being nationalist/cultural in nature, but even then, it was more about protecting the potential for profit and power than protecting or empowering the people. If you check the history of (white) gangsterism you see that they all started (in their formative period) by exploiting (and terrorizing) their own (people) of their own (working) class in order to gain wealth/power for their own little group/family/gang/cosa nostra/cabal/army, The "lucky ones" graduated to be part of the very shitstem itself by buying/taking businesses (where they exploit others), buying (and buying in) politicians (to do their bidding), and on and on.... In the end they no longer had to exploit their own, because they could then just exploit others (usually Black/Brown folks) who were less fortunate/clever than them, because now they WERE the shitstem.... Gangster paradise.... in full effect....

Then there is the racist element that has always been an undercurrent of gang life in america and how the powers that be have always used gangsters to do their dirty work. In New York City, Irish gangs led the assaults on African Americans during the Civil War "Draft Riots" and Klu Klux Klan (yes, they're a gang too) activity helped keep Los Angeles Mexicans politically quiet in the early 20th century as well as terrorize Black people in the south. And after world war I, youth gangs in Chicago were used to maintain a violent enforcement of the segregated racial order. White gangs connected to the Democratic Party were largely responsible for the duration (and harsh violence) of the 1919 race riots that killed 38 Black people.

The Hip-Hop honed and BET toned neo Black "gangsta culture" in america needs to be very real(alistic) about what it is up to and what it is about, because it is traveling down that same counter-revolutionary road (to nowhere) that the white gangs traversed before them. Getting drugs from the white man and then selling it to Black children is NOT revolutionary. Using the white man's guns to blow off another Black brothers head because he messed with your hustle is NOT revolutionary. Pimping your Black sister is NOT revolutionary. Giving the money you made (from ya hustle) right back to the man by spending it on diamonds, platinum, gold, sweat and blood (from Africa) is NOT revolutionary.

Piling away ya ill gotten gains to buy a Lexus or Humvee is NOT revolutionary. Accumulating wealth by workin the shitstem while leaving the shitstem intact (and maybe even further strengthening it) so that the machine can continue to downpress everyone else for generations to come is SHO NOT revolutionary. Playing the role of money hungry mobster-capitalist-Black ghetto-republicrat so that you too can be embraced by babylon ain't getting it either. But it IS pretty damn close to being just one more way to be used (up) by the shitstem to maintain the shitstem, just as the white gangs were used in the past to maintain the machine against you.... So, in the end (game) are we getting paid, or just gettin' played?

But none the less, "Gangsta" culture (at this point) is a reality of our existence/surroundings, and all them young black youths that are in the prisons and the juvie centers and on the streets ARE caught up in the gangsta culture cuz there ain't nothing else. No alternatives and no where to turn, as far as the i and i can see. And, like it or not, Bill Cosby or Oprah, telling someone who is caught between Iraq and a hard place to "stop cursing and calling themselves a nigga or a pimp and calling they sistas bitches and hos (and while ya at it pull up ya pants and ya long ass t-shirt too)" ain't gonna fix what's severely broke in america for the descendents of slaves. And telling them that dealing drugs or idolizing Tony Montana and John Gotti is "wrong" (and stupid) ain't getting at the root of the true problema either.... Like it or don't, Hip Hop, and maybe to an even greater degree "gangsta rap" has turned out to be a way out (and maybe the only way out) for folks caught up in the ghetto-life, and it's one of the only ways "in" to the (white-ruled) society of prospering "gangsters". It sure as hell sells way better than "conscious rap" these days, don't it? Just ask Public Enemy, X-Clan or Poor Righteous teachers. Or better yet, ask any of the "entre-preneurial pimps", "mogul mafiosos", "republican rappers" or dirty diplomats" currently clockin corporate cream.... If ya gonna sell out, ya might as well do it right. Right?

And that is why otherwise "conscious" (and perhaps revolutionary) brothers (and even the sisters who take the biggest brunt and blows of gangstas MTVideo vitriol, venom and violence) feel like they have to figure out a way to make "gangsta" revolutionary. Or, as one spoken word (Good) sista poet said,

“take our beats back in the name of the revolution”. But as Audre Lorde said, and we should try to remember, “the masters tools will never dismantle the master’s house”. Revolution (as we choose to define it and as it should be defined) should be uplifting, uprising, overturning, revealing, empowering..... it should dissect, dismantle and destroy any all things that are dehumanizing, corrupt, exploitative, unjust, unfair, unacceptable. Including capitalism. But unfortunately, that just ain’t never been at the top of the list of things to do for gangsters.....

However, the Young Lords (from Chicago) started out as a gang. So did the Zulu Nation (in NYC). And, before there was Rap, there was gangs tagging up on ghetto walls and trains in the inner-shitty. And that begat Hip Hop. Also in Chicago, in 1966, after speaking with Martin Luther King Jr., three street gangs formed a coalition called “LSD” (the Vice Lords, Stones, and Disciples), and took part in the struggle for construction jobs for Black people, and also met regularly with Fred Hampton, leader of the Illinois Black Panther Party. And, In South Africa, youth gangs in Soweto and other cities joined with the ANC in opposition to the apartheid regime.

In Northern Ireland, New Zealand, and Uruguay, the revolutionary forces there, channeled the alienation of the youth gangs into political parties and even incorporated some of their underground gang tactics for the cause of the revolution. Two more street gangs, The Latin Kings (and Queen nation) and NETA have been known to support radical/revolutionary causes, and maybe the CRIPS really actually are (or could be) a “Cultural Revolution/Restoration In Progress”.

But, sadly, once the Black/brown radical/revolutionary movements from back in the day were crushed by the system, the gangstas on the street were forced into an ideology of survival and the potential revolutionary Robin Hood became just another robber in the hood. Today, there is a strong Gangsta culture in the ghetto that is living (and in many ways thriving) according to that slum survival (of the slickest) ethic which is gangsterism, while the revolutionary movement is on it’s last leg, trying to cling to life (and survive) by embracing that same gangsterism code of (mis)conduct

that has always been the antithesis of real and radical revolutionary ideology.... Revolutionaries used to build (and build up) with gangstas, drop science on them about the struggle, teach them how to turn violence into revolutionary violence (there IS a difference), show them how to turn that god given street knowledge into a weapon against the system. It used to be that the revolutionary’s credo was “beat the system”. Nowadays it’s more like “if ya can’t beat em, join em” .... Back in the days of the Black Panthers, every street kid was a potential revolutionary. Now, in the daze of the lap dancers, it seems that every street kid is ALREADY a gangsta.

But the truth is, that while you can make gangstas into revolutionaries, you can’t make gangsta revolutionary. But until there is a strong, revolutionary movement that can recruit the energy and intellect of the ghetto gangsta for good, then all we will have is gangstas, but no(t) revolution(aries).

- N4P

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## THE STRUGGLE AGAINST OPPRESSION

It is the duty of us activists who are fortunate enough to be locked in combat with the fascists, not only to vigorously struggle against them with every weapon at our disposal, but to dramatize the struggle, the issues, our tactics, and the viciousness, cruelty and reactionary nature of the oppressor. Only by personal example can we hope to reach, awaken and inspire the masses to action against fascist oppression. The inspiration, example and hope which the heroic struggle of the people of Vietnam gives to millions of little people like us all over the world best illustrates this point. Another heroic example was that of the thousands of Black freedom fighters of Watts, Detroit, Newark, Buffalo, Rochester and other cities who, though unarmed, fought against the tanks unleashed against them by the frightened rulers after they defeated the combined forces of the city and state police goons. The anti-war demonstration in Washington, D.C. last fall and the demonstrators' defiance of the awesome display of force employed by the frightened top dogs to fend off the angry masses from the very door of their lair was another inspiring and heroic dramatization of the struggle which awakened millions of people the world over. On a smaller scale and local level –but equally important, inspiring and heroic –are the thousands of small anti-war picket lines in hundreds of cities –like

the ones by our group here in Buffalo –who daily brave the assaults, jailings, abuse, coercion and intimidation of the police goons, paid scabs, fascists and brain-washed fools.

With all the above heroic examples to guide and inspire me, how can I take a different stand and still consider myself a fighter against oppression and militarism? I was fighting the oppressor outside. I am still following the same tactics. As in the case of the bookshop, I am refusing to allow these fascist goons to coerce and intimidate me into giving up and cooperating in the legal lynching they have been struggling to give me. The recent backfiring of their tactic of subjecting me to psychiatric intimidation is a case in point. Since the original arrest was a frame-up, the fantastic \$50,000 bail, Felicetta's and Amico's lies to the Senate Internal Subcommittee Hearing last August and the press, the psychiatric examination, the interference with my mail, and the severing of the indictment originally placed against Geraldine and me, etc. are of necessity, defensive acts (contrived to protect the original frame-up) resting on a rotten foundation. It is easy to see, therefore, why their defensive acts became untenable at the slightest challenge; the greater the challenge, the more hasty and ill-contrived defenses must the frightened oppressor put up to shore up his crumbling position and protect the original frame-up from exposure; but since every defense he puts up is based on the rotten foundation, each defense makes him more vulnerable than before and hastens his eventual exposure and defeat.

The U. S. faces a parallel dilemma in Vietnam. It is being defeated by midget Vietnam because its very reason for being in Vietnam in the first place is unjustifiable. Therefore, regardless of what the U. S. does in Vietnam, it cannot defend its presence there either militarily or politically –as events are proving. Each new shipment of U. S. troops to Vietnam provides a new target for the V. C. to ambush; every U. S. base or stronghold is convertible into a trap like Khe Sanh; every lie told to the American people –such as our winning the war, and the bogus attack on U. S. warships in Tonkin Gulf –is exposed. Only by challenging and opposing their lies and acts in the streets, courtroom and battlefield will we defeat the fascist oppressors.

Martin Sostre, 1968

# POET PROPHET PUERTO RICAN



Puerto Rico's most well known poet, Julia de Burgos, was born in Carolina, Puerto Rico on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1914 and died in 1953 at the age of 39. With such a short life, myths developed about how Julia lived and died. She has mostly been compared to fellow talented poetesses. But perhaps a better comparison would be to fellow boricua, Luisa Capetillo, who also challenged self-proclaimed masters of any kind, capitalism, and patriarchy. Capetillo was also another advocate of free love in its many forms. Lastly, Julia is to be placed in the ranks of another dama Boricua and that is Lolita Lebrón. There may not be evidence that Julia ever actually took up arms for the Puerto Rican liberation struggle as Lolita Lebrón did, but her radical poems inform us that like Lolita, she believed in Puerto Rico's right to be free and sovereign. Her poems encouraged women to become soldiers in the struggle and delivered blows against the system inspired others to do the same with words like: "Don't let your silence nurture the enemy's strength, nor weaken your arms for corrupt bribes." Julia's poems narrated her quest for liberation—a liberation she searched for within herself, within her homeland and finally within death.

Born just 16 years after the u.s. invasion of her homeland, Julia's short life bore witness to early colonialism in Puerto Rico, imposed u.s. citizenship for Puerto Ricans in 1917, the "Great" Depression which hurt the u.s. but devastated PR, the grim decade

of political repression of 1930s' Puerto Rico, and finally the implementing of Puerto Rico's "associated and ridiculous state" status. Throughout these injustices, one thing remained constant and that was the global institutionalized oppression of the poor masses that lived without the promise of daily bread. In Puerto Rico, it was north american imperialism that was responsible for the subjugation of the poor. In a poem written for the exploited Jibaro, Julia wrote: "the imperialism of the united states has a wide grave" within which all the stolen goods and injured loved ones of the exploited could be found. To Julia the new agricultural and industrial production in Puerto Rico was a product of capitalism that served a foreign elite while exploiting her people and keeping them hungry and poor. The agricultural production created by the "calloused hands and feet" of the jíbaros working on sugar, coconut and other plantations produced not for the hungry masses but "food for the traitor". All this inequality perpetuated by capitalist wealth created what Julia believed to be a rural unrest ripe for revolution:

*Tradition is burning in the countryside!  
Hope is burning in the countryside!  
Man is burning in the countryside!  
It is the splitting earth, burning from injustices.  
The river won't put it out;  
The ponds won't put it out....*

What would put the fire out were the men and women of the campo who were already burning, already in the fire, by taking it upon themselves to break the chains.

Julia sought freedom in the land of her beloved island nation, in its waters, mountains, coco and caña plantations. The same way that Julia saw the oppressive effects of capitalism and imperialism on her people, she knew that the land was also impacted by this suffering. Yet Julia lived through destructive hurricanes and understood that nature was rebellious, something that no imperialist could control. To become like the river, like the moon or the wind was to rebel. It meant living freely as an element of nature and not by the dictates of man. According to Julia, if people could follow this natural path to live in harmony, then "ripe... the earth will gather its harvest of free men!"

Like most prophets, not respected in their own worlds, Julia struggled with being misunderstood and unappreciated. But she stayed strong knowing that that was her calling. In a letter to her sister Consuelo, she once wrote that her destiny lied in "the shadow alongside the light, the pain together with happiness". This solemn existence is the one that allowed Julia to maintain her heightened awareness of the world's suffering and to battle against it. Losing herself in her own personal happiness meant risking complacency, and becoming numb to the atrocities of the world. This self-sacrifice became the true essence of Julia's struggle, where she saw her own experience of pain as a way to save others: "I shall be light for his hands when they turn to climb the days, in the sacred struggle of the instinct to save itself from gusts of suicide."

Part of Julia's quest for liberation was to seek that liberation within her self. Through her personal relationship with Puerto Rico she developed her self-awareness and love for freedom. In love and in society she had to develop a firm character to resist the patriarchy and not succumb to its pressures to exist as a submissive woman. Julia was too huge a spirit to be contained by any thing or any one. In one of her poems Julia dedicates words to her two selves, the one that might fall prey to societal pressures and the real Julia de Burgos that successfully resists and rejects those pressures daily. In the poem "A Julia de Burgos" she goes toe to toe with a Julia who might dare give in.

*You belong to your husband, your master; not me;  
I belong to no one, or to all, because to all, to all  
In my pure feeling and in thought I give myself.*

Here, Julia refuses to conform to the accepted definition of love. She refuses to belong to any one person but to all people. She refuses the love of one to take on the love of many, meaning all her people from her país. Her poem goes on:

*In me what governs is my sole heart, my sole thoughts  
What governs in me is me.  
You, flower of aristocracy, and I, flower of the people.  
You in you have everything and you owe it to everyone  
Meanwhile my nothing I owe to no one.*

These words deliver a hammer blow to the capitalism that Julia despised which institutionalized the quest for more and more material gain. For Julia, the state of owing nothing to no one and the ability to control oneself versus being under the dictates of others represents true liberation of self. This anarchistic approach recalls the natural state of the land when nothing and no one but the earth ruled and nothing was owed to no masters because they did not exist.

Through her poems, Julia sought to extend this individual liberation as a collective liberation for all women. Part of this was understanding that women often served as mere status symbols for men or were added to the heap of commodities representing material wealth for another's pleasure disguised as their own. Like Luisa Capetillo, she was careful to not let physical or emotional pleasure interfere with her real mission of fighting for liberation. In her poem "Despierta", written as a wake-up call to women she offers her advice on the issue:

*Woman,  
you who carry in your womb the fire of Boricua soil...  
Put aside your pleasures  
and heroically defend the innocence of your nation and its virtue.  
The innocence threatened by tyrants who seek to corrupt  
our pure sentiments  
and launch us into a seductive abyss;  
where absorbed in pleasures  
and forgetting a thousand duties  
we'll breathe the degrading and destructive perfumes of vice.*

Julia's message in her poem "Despierta" (Wake up) was not just one of feminism or of women's liberation. What she is proposing in this particular piece is for women to become soldiers in the fight for Puerto Rican liberation. The poem "Despierta" goes on to proclaim a most revolutionary call to female action:

*March Boricua woman, on the front line that defends your virtue  
Break the miserable tie that chains you to your prison  
and valiantly resurge,  
to offer your beautiful blood  
to the cause of liberation that offers you dignity and redemption.*

Julia's words speak to the reality of having lived in Puerto Rico during a time in which innocent civilians were slain in the streets by colonial authorities, as a 1937 example recalls of one man who wrote the words "Abajo los Asesinos" in his own blood on a wall. Julia's poems "Domingo de Ramos" and "¡Viva La República! ¡Abajo Los Asesinos!" were dedicated to the bloodshed of this Ponce Massacre.

Julia also had connections to the radical Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico and was an admirer of its President, Pedro Albizu Campos, referencing him in several poems and writing a song to



him, "Una canción a Albizu Campos". She was also very close to Nationalist Party/ fellow poet comrades Juan Antonio Corretjer and Clemente Soto Velez. When these men together with Albizu and 5 other Nationalists were arrested in 1937 and sent to a federal prison, Julia was on the committee for their ex-carceration. Several years later, after having left Puerto Rico to travel to Cuba and the United States, in a 1945 letter to her sister, Julia wrote: "I want to go to Puerto Rico as soon as possible to put my efforts into the total liberation of our homeland". Her political liberation poems circulated in pro-independence zines and papers, her poems also communicated an urgent need to resolve the political status issue of her homeland, as seen in this excerpt of her poem "Ours is the Hour":

*...seize your machete  
and embrace the ranks of INDEPENDENCE!  
Traitors and Judases tremble!  
Ours is the hour;...  
And tyranny will dance its dance  
-its macabre farewell dance  
wrapped in the blood of the thousand traitors  
that have nourished  
their vile savagery  
and their cowardice.*

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Here the machete becomes the tool for liberation. It is a tribute to the jíbaros who work the land. In Julia's poetry the land of Puerto Rico, the very thing that taught Julia how to exist freely was a metaphor for political liberation. In the poem "Río Grande de Loíza" Julia wrote: "Great river. Great flood of tears. The greatest of all our island's cries, if it weren't for the one that escapes the eyes of my soul for my enslaved people." With these words, she transformed the river into a deep well of tears collected from the suffering of Puerto Rico, a testament to the need for political liberation.

*Let no one profane my death with sobs  
Nor blanket me forever with innocent earth;  
that in the free moment they leave me to freely  
Have the only freedom of this planet*

The lives of poets and prophets are often laced with tragedy. In her mid 30s it seemed that Julia began to predict an end to her short life. Her poems on this topic were partly a prophecy of her impending death as well as a call to death, to bring it on as if she felt her work was done and it was time to move on. Some combatants come to this life to be physical soldiers fighting for a cause. Others come as messengers to document the struggle and inspire others within and beyond their lifetime. It seems Julia served the latter purpose.

Julia welcomed death as another method of achieving liberation or what some might consider the truest liberation. She faced death boldly, seldom admitting fear. In some poems she even welcomed death and its liberation enthusiastically: "With what

ferocious happiness will my bones begin to seek small windows in the brown flesh...And I...giving myself fiercely and freely to the elements and alone breaking my chains!" These quotes make it plain. She asked that people leave her free to have "the only freedom of this planet". These are not the words of a pessimist. She knew liberation would come for Puerto Rico, just not in her lifetime. In approaching death Julia never reneged on her commitment to the cause of Puerto Rican liberation and continued to indict the united states as the evil imperial power subjugating Puerto Rico. Writing from the united states Julia sent her sister this powerful quote: "I hunger for liberation. If I die, I don't want this tragic nation to swallow my bones. They need the warmth of Borinquen if only to strengthen the worms over there, not the ones here."

Julia's desire to rest in piece took a tragic turn when north american worms nearly took a taste of her flesh. In the cold solitude of New York City, Julia was institutionalized. Shortly after being released from the hospital in 1953, Julia was reported as missing by her friends and family. It was discovered that she had collapsed from pneumonia on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 105<sup>th</sup> Street in East Harlem. She was rushed to the hospital but died shortly thereafter. Unidentified, she was buried in the city's Potters Field, in a "paupers grave". After a successful search by her companer@s, Julia's remains were found one month later and finally returned to her beloved Boriken on September 6 of that year.

*Alive in the great parade  
of all the patriots who have died of anger  
And from anger awaken*

In death Julia de Burgos was able to secure the utopia she spent her life describing in poems. Her utopia was the utmost in liberation: liberation of self, liberation of her people, and a complete immersion of the human back into the cycle of nature and the universe. With her poems as roadmaps, future generations would bring to life Julia's utopian vision as described in these words:

*One day I will go dance with you  
To a faraway place  
Where no law exists, nor reason governs;*

*Where the water is breeze, where the bird is flower;  
Where everything pure and natural is confused  
With the grace of God*

- Yaz



24

# GRAFFITI AS PROTEST

"Subways are corporate America's way of getting its people to work, and the trains were clones themselves, they were all supposed to be silver and blue, a form of imperialism and control. And we took that and completely changed it." - LEE

"The letters are weapons" – Rammellzee

The idea of protest is to get out a message that will create change (that will start in people's heads), but how does that change come about? Does it come about because the system sees the error of its ways and decides to "change"? Or does change come about because authoritarians are forced, at the risk of completely losing power, to acquiesce to the demand for change? Or maybe it happens because the community creates a collective chaos that no longer even acknowledges the authority of the authorities?

The authoritarians have gotten used to (peaceful) protest-as-usual and have grown accustomed to the activism-by-the-book tactics that we wheel out of the attic every time there's a new war, police brutality assault, racist attack or any other axis of evil action that may occur on any given day in these "times of terror(ism)".

By now, they know, beyond a shadow of a doubt that slogans like "No Justice, No Peace" are just rhetoric with no teeth;



catch phrases with no bite. So, rather than (try to) stop the people from marching on Washington, the mayors house, wall street, the UN or anywhere else, the system actually sanctions and "permits" these marches, protest rallies and pickets in order to keep the lid on their calculated control of the masses and, while they are at it, collect data and make files on protesters. But the common denominator in creating change is fear. For the people it's in overcoming the fear of retribution from authority (those scary files or scarier batons and rubber bullets) and for the authoritarians it's the fear of losing power (loss of control clothed in culture and chaos). If you want change then you need to strike fear into the authoritarians, not ask them permission to let you protest!

So what better way to strike fear into the mentality of the authoritarians then for an army of guerrilla graffiti writers to take over the streets, sidewalks, walls, windows of every avenue in every slum and suburb, creating cultural chaos that can't be controlled or contained? 5000 graffiti writers with spray cans, markers and masks can do more damage than 500,000 protesters with picket signs, chants and a permit. Graffiti has historically been a viable form of protest that's always had the authorities looking over their shoulder and watching their back. The act of placing words or slogans or images scrawled across public walls for all to see without permission or approval, without sponsorship or censorship has a power that the system can't contain and therefore fears. If democracy is the process of an individual's voice being heard within the greater collective, then graffiti is democracy in action.

The war to win the "hearts and minds" of the masses is waged not with guns and bombs, but with access to information. But the system controls all "sanctioned" access. Imagination is the nemesis of authority and the powers that be know this, so the system is constantly at work bombarding us with distortion and dis-information that lacks inspiration and imagination, and that is created solely to control us. Billboards sell lifestyles no one can afford, newspapers and magazines sell ideology no one can afford to have and, radio and TV sell distractions no one can afford to be without. So we are taught to "want it all". This commercial carpet bombing is on constant rotation on every (mental) channel, so in order to counter it and (at least) bring the battle to a stand still

(remember, the guerrilla wins by not losing), new, radical, alternative and mind altering ideas must be brought directly to the people, by (m)any means necessary.



The inherent beauty of graffiti is its ability to communicate ideas to people directly and instantly, and anyone who can spell and spray (or scrawl) can do it. Graffiti, like any radical idea, is like a vandal virus, so once it gets out amongst people it can spread, insinuating itself into every wall or thought. Graffiti can carry those radical ideas to places where the big all-controlling commercial culture can't even go. Graffiti can also communicate those very same radical ideas right behind the enemy lines of the authoritarian enemy itself. And while it's true that those "illegal" images can last only as long as the authorities don't buff them, an(y) army of graffiti artists working together in small crews can strain the resources of authoritarians and the imagination and ideas will live on. And with an organized army of guerrilla graffiti artists attacking the public spaces in which people gather, many of the messages will stay up and the people can be constantly exposed to real and radical ideas that challenge everyone to move pa'lante and eventually right over and beyond the authorities.

Graffiti has always been clandestine, illegal, agitating anti-authoritarian art, practiced outside of the "acceptable", against the system, contrary to the power structure. These characteristics

continue to make it a threat in the eyes of the authorities, a potential hand grenade with out a pin, a bomb to the system. With commando crews of graffiti guerrillas taking back public spaces with new ideas, the mere act of fearlessness in the face of authoritarian retribution is enough inspiration for others to rebel in whatever way they can.

Graffiti was born in the streets. The clandestine nature of this "unacceptable" outlaw(ed) art of the "ghetto culture" allows it to be among people and thrive within the masses and help make the movement. Graffiti is in constant dialogue with the people. It is the people's art, and can be the people's literature, the people's newspapers, It IS the people. This is something that the system fears, and rightly so. With an underground army of graffiti artists voicing the concerns of the people right in plain sight without "permission", the anarchy of action can flourish and flow and the monolithic chokehold of ideology that the system has over the people can (and will) begin to weaken. And, without publicly organized protest, the authoritarians don't know who's protesting or how many protesters there even are, and an atmosphere of fear that usually permeates among people begins to reverse itself back onto the authoritarians.

Graffiti as protest, works on many levels at once. Graffiti places new and radical ideas into a public sphere. New and radical ideas that might otherwise might never have had a voice. It creates dialogue and dialogue creates community and community creates autonomy. Graffiti reclaims public space and gives people an opportunity to exercise that autonomy over the places they work, live, learn, and play. Graffiti's ability to work successfully within an atmosphere of illegality creates a formula for numerous smaller victories over authority. It empowers people to begin to take back the other parts of their lives that in the past they never even realized they no longer had control over. Graffiti is a criminal act of beautification in much the same way that reclaiming an abandoned open city lot and creating a garden with a casita is a criminal act. As a form of protest, graffiti becomes the first domino in the downfall of authority. And the complications placed on our lives by authority can simply be overthrown with a simple thought that is illegally placed on a public wall for all to see and share.

- vagabond

# SEXUALITY AND INTELLECTUAL WORK

(Fragments of a letter)

Now with regards to what you wrote about only wanting to be my friend... here's my reply. You write this today, but I remember the first time you had the opportunity to have a casual conversation with me in Palmetto. I understood your intention, which I will not censor, as similar to what we feel when we find a lovely flower and just desire to inhale its perfume, despite the fact that we don't even know its name nor will we ever come across it again. There's nothing strange about that. It was a very natural desire and I would have given into it if it hadn't been for the conflicting circumstances surrounding me, affecting my aspirations and feelings. I diverted from my purpose of not allowing myself to loose mental energy nor allow my cosmic tranquility to be disturbed by that which precisely resides in the material domain. In other words, reserving my sexual energy allows me to purify my mental strength.

One cannot possess mental strength or have a powerful mind for that matter, if we are preoccupied by our material interests that like weather vanes move in whichever way the wind blows.

Do I make myself clear? Your friend? Why not? By any chance did I ever stop being your friend? I do not doubt that my affable and loving temperament or my sweet and patient character - despite my activeness and energy—has caused some to dream of material delights. Nor does it amaze me because such people not only remain in their fantasy, but they also believe that one cannot be affectionate outside of lovemaking.

But I have no right to judge such individuals. Sure I must be careful to not be taken by surprise by such individuals as I am on a superior plane. If in spite of my vigilance - for one of those innocent characteristics—I might be taken by surprise then this is all natural. It would only demonstrate my good faith and that if I abstain, it's not because of my ego, nor to cause pain, it is because I find it unnecessary. But during those times when others have deemed

it to be very necessary and as a result, I have found myself in a blind alley, I have exhausted the use of all my weapons, without resentment or arrogance. Still I try to avoid such wars, to not leave my mental energy and purpose moribund in the battle camp. What do you desire? What do you propose, that I be your friend? I am your friend sincerely.

P.S. I reread your letter. You say that you are an admirer of my theories, but only if I am putting them into practice! What you have here is that it is impossible to please everyone. Nor has everyone found themselves in opportune moments to give details. But by chance you believe that I would only think of pleasing all those who do not understand me? In that case this would turn into a competition of commerce and for those who are into commerce, I guess there's lot of trade on the market. All this would require that I descend from the Olympic mountaintop on which I sit, to unjustifiably confuse myself with matters of competition or commerce. Do you think I should descend? When I am already at the unimaginably inaccessible summit! And I am very close to beginning the work towards penetrating the shortcut to wisdom!...

Let me get to it. You're free to help if you can or you'd like so that my feet won't trip over the thorns on the path along the journey. In closing, you know that I am an addicted friend and defender of justice and the truth.

- Luisa Capetillo, 1913

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# BOMBS OVER EL BARRIO



"This war did not spring up on our land, this war was brought upon us... This war has come from robbery, from the stealing of our land." - Spotted Tail, Native American

"We are poor ...but we are free. No white man controls our footsteps. If we must die...we die defending our rights." - Sitting Bull, Native American

"The ghetto is the best military preparation for the war in Iraq" - Jerrold, Bronze Star recipient

The u.s. military has traditionally preyed upon poor black/brown people in one way or another. Whether invading, occupying, overthrowing, colonizing, killing, robbing OR recruiting them, black/brown bodies have always served a vital purpose for uncle sam's imperial/colonial machine. Ripped out of the poverty-stricken calles of colonized Puerto Rico or snatched from the diasporic dumpsites and barrios/reservations in the u.s., poor young people (of color) continue to play the role of colonial/capitalist cannon fodder.

Even still, for many youths in the ghettos of amerika, the perception is that joining the military and perhaps fighting (and dying) in a war in some far off "foreign" land is not the worst fate that could befall them. After all, every inner city kid knows that you

could just as easily expire on any day of the week from a well aimed bullet from a white colonial cop or stray shrapnel sprayed by some other street/slum surviving "soldier". And if you manage to dodge them shots, there's a million other ways to die on las esquinas de las esquinas de nueva york.

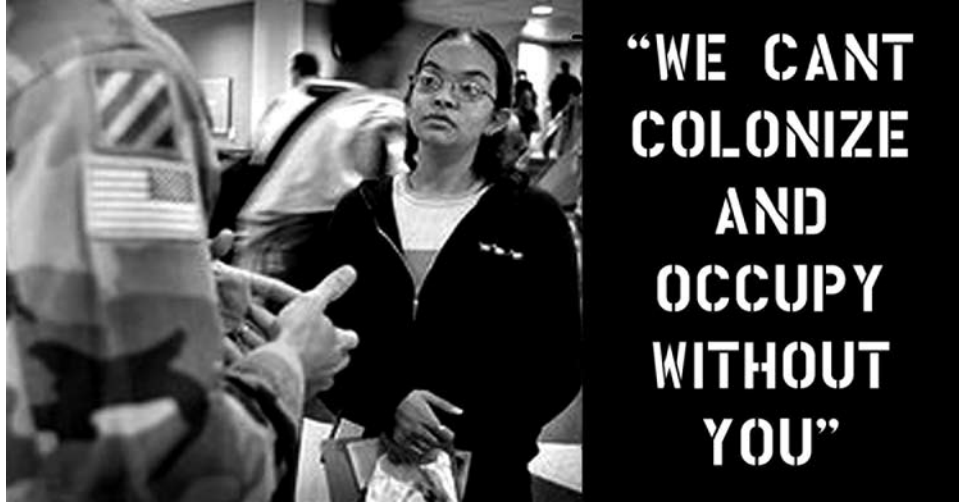
So for most poor youth, the "army" is a job just like a policeman or a prison guard. "Somebody's gotta do it". It also pays better than mcdonalds, has better benefits than dealing dope to dopes on the corner and beats doing "hard" time within the prison industrial complex. It could also potentially get you off the streets of the gritty shitty, even if it might ultimately be in some (not so) stylish (boricua/black) body bag.

So if we are really serious about "anti-recruitment", we have to consider whether or not we are providing/devising/creating real alternatives to/for youth who don't see a "future". We also need to be teaching them tactics of autonomy that will help and convince disenfranchised and disempowered youth to look to other directions and not towards the mighty military (money/mayhem) machine.

Unfortunately, it's just not enough to play "professional activists" and hand out a few flyers that tell of the "evils" of war. Nor is it enough to simply shout/shoot down young people's plans by announcing to them that if they join the marines/army/navy/air force/etc. they will be bad "baby killers", when those kids are barely babies themselves who have been at war (to simply survive) all their lives in amerikas ghettos/barrios.

We have to start thinking differently about life in the barrios/ghettos/reservations of amerika. We need to create new truly autonomous comunidades where our (disenfranchised/disempowered and just plain dissed) people can (learn to/be able to) provide food, shelter, clothing and futures for themselves, without having to rely on any "leaders", liars/lawyers, politricksters, preachers or "providers", who act/pretend as if they never heard the old saying about teaching a man to fish (give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime).

In the black/brown ghettos/barrrios of amerika today (nearly everyone (young and old) has to work at subservient/menial jobs (often for mega-million dollar making corporations) for (modern day) slave wages in order to simply keep livin'/alive. And those who don't/can't (or refuse to) work have to rely on stealing/hustling to "survive amerika" and the capitalist culture/shock. Of course stealing is "illegal" and hustling is "wrong" so street codes of survival mean prison for most and poverty for all.



So, if we really want to destroy the military machine and halt the use of black/brown bodies as capitalist/cultural cannon fodder, then "anti-recruitment" must include the creation of real alternatives as well as authentic anti-authoritarian action. Only in this way will we begin to create a true self-sufficiency and empowerment in the (neighbor)hood.

A real autonomous community would learn (and be taught) to no longer see itself as being "beneath/below/ beholden to" or afraid of the thumb/jack boot of the "dominant" shitstem; no longer feel compelled to live/abide by the controlling cultures laws, rules, regulations and realities. A truly/newly free people would re-create their own reality and rights (and wrongs).

Whatever comes into (whether built/opened or organized) your ghetto/barrio liberated zone would/should belong to EVERYONE who lives in that community. (No one should go hungry or freeze because they have no money to buy food or a warm coat

or adequate shelter and heat), So anyone/everyone who is coming in (from outside or even from within) to exploit the poverty and survival conditions of the autonomous ghetto/barrio community by charging you a cost for food or clothes, shelter or anything else you need to simply live/survive/thrive, or by inviting your youth to sell/throw their bodies (in)to someone else's money making (war) machine coffers/coffins, is actually breaking the law of righteous right(s) and wrongs within our ghetto/barrio autonomous zones. They must be told/shown/reminded of this through both words and action(s) and re-actions.

A liberated community would do for self while controlling the "supply" themselves. What they can't make they would barter (with each other and with other third world ghetto/barrio cultures). What they can't have they would take (from the other man instead of their brotherman). And what they don't (really) need they wouldn't use or even want. That includes the man-u-fractured foods and other machine-made-merchandise that are/is hawked on every corner in our capitalist/consumer/con-sumptive/chain store society; "they schools" that teach us how to be better beggars and (human) bombs; the "poverty police" who stand like "public safety" sentinels on every corner of every calle "protecting" us from ourselves and outsiders from us; and uncle sham's sold-out soldiers whose sole goal is to kidnap ghetto youth with an offer they can't re-use.

- N4P

# QUE VIVA EL BARRIO

“In the contemporary world we must recognize the ever more widespread destruction of those conditions under which intellectual creation is possible”

- Andre Breton, Leon Trotsky, Diego Rivera: Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art, July 25, 1938.

We know that many artists and thinkers, poor people of all colors, are today scattered throughout Harlem, their voices drowned out by the loud chorus of well-heeled liars and poseurs whose harangue smells like the opportunism available to the few that feed off the social oppression, an army of trendy weight conscious geniuses not seeking new paths but new subsidies, not revolution, not new life but the reducible drone of law and order, an art that turns beauty, the burning impatience of the marvelous into a consumer good, not the consuming good .

The poetry of El barrio, at its most authentic, is not a poetic form. It is a cry of the mind turning back on itself, the heart of a heartless social condition, determined to burst apart its fetters, even if it must be with material hammers, hence the alchemy of politics and poetry, separable only by museum sophists, club promoters and funeral directors, not to mention the bourgeois, yuppie real-estate invaders, who seek to destroy that which destroys them, the hipster army, the beatnik battalion. The independence and complete freedom of art is the miracle of revolution, the inspired frenzy of history.

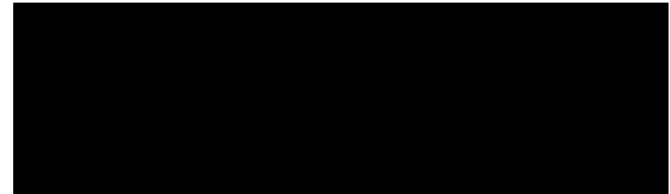
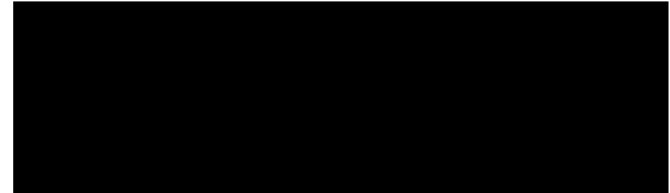
Mystico-materialism, like a fog, blankets the warm rain wet streets, the soil of poetic consciousness in this place, rising still from the deep well of Afro-Cuban espiritu, boricua extremes, the rambling folk truths, prophecies of struggling immigrants, the authentic-visionary intellects, organizing free speech protests, slinging lingo into jazzy conguero space, along, between, and under dense, low-rise, housing project, big sky, close knit streets, who behave dramatically in the worldly freedom-in-practice that would create a more favorable terrain for the guerilla poet, the Nuyo-rican poet, the street poets to survive, to thrive, to live. The manifestation of this poetry is a form of spontaneity born of necessity, governed by laws

which shape intellectual creation in fascist times, being constantly reborn in the depths of life, reading the desires of humanity's consciousness and the commands of mad love and total freedom.

In 2007, what grows in the Blood Acre of El Barrio? What still exists in the land of speculation and gentrification, the displacing of the poor, the desecration and destruction of the neighborhood, its geo-spiritual centers, its public gathering places for all its diverse people, its affordable housing, casitas and cultural centers? Primarily a pseudo-art art war itself, which according to script, must lack hope. We need bodies that will no longer produce nor submit to capitalist miserabilism!

Presently, they gather their potent force, subterranean in the company -church, expanse in the crevices of creation, giving sight to the blind, free reign to human consciousness and unconsciousness, fashioning the working class gun, the poor person's tool, the poet's pen. They simply don't expect nothing! They will be, must be, heard from again! ...Spanish Harlem RIP ...Que Viva El Barrio!

- Frank Morales





**SALVO**  
**FRIEND**  
**TO**  
**IMAGINATION**  
**ENEMY**  
**TO**  
**AUTHORITY**

"IT'S NO  
LONGER  
A SONG  
IT'S A  
~~SCREAM~~"  
- JULIA

