

Dylcia Pagán, Presente!

written by Berta Joubert-Ceci
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Dylcia Pagán

A lot is happening in this colony that deserves to be widely discussed. However, today, I want to pause and pay tribute to a beloved comrade in struggles who passed away on June 30. Comrade Dylcia Pagán.

Like many Puerto Ricans, Dylcia was born in New York City. There, within the belly of the beast, as José Martí called the United States, she witnessed firsthand its injustices. She studied in its schools and colleges and, seeing the need to empower Puerto Rican students, helped create the Union of Puerto Rican Students at Brooklyn College, which led to the formation of a Department of Puerto Rican Studies.

She joined the Civil Rights movement; she was a documentary researcher gaining prestige as a producer of children's programs on the major TV networks in that country.

But it was her love for her homeland, the desire for Puerto Rico to finally stop being a colony of that empire, where she lived and witnessed its cruelties every day, that led her to join and engage actively in the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN).

This affiliation, an honorable life choice, exacted a toll through myriad sacrifices, as relentless persecution of advocates for independence by agents of the empire persisted unabated in both Puerto Rico and the United States.

That affiliation, that honorable life decision, exacted a toll through myriad sacrifices as the persecution of advocates for independence by the empire's agents, both in Puerto Rico and in the United States, was – and still is – relentless. And that is why she was separated from her son at a very young age, whom she left in the care of a Mexican family to protect him. This way, he would be out of danger in the USA and PR.

On April 4, 1980, she was arrested and sentenced to 63 years, along with eleven other militants in the state of Illinois, accused of seditious conspiracy. That is the term federal authorities use to imprison Puerto Rican fighters: conspiracy to overthrow the US government in Puerto Rico.

After nearly 20 years in prison, in 1999, President Bill Clinton released her along with nine other comrades after an intense international campaign for their freedom. Upon returning to Puerto Rico, Dylcia dedicated herself to the struggle of the impoverished communities in Loíza in the north of the country until her last day. Comrade Dylcia Noemí Pagán, Presente!

From Puerto Rico, via Radio Clarín de Colombia, Berta Joubert-Ceci.

