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*Penumbra* is the official, refereed, scholarly journal of Union Institute & University's Ph.D. Program in Interdisciplinary Studies. The journal is published at regular intervals and dedicated to challenging traditional academic and creative disciplinary boundaries in the context of social change.

*Penumbra's* purpose is to promote theoretically informed engagements with concrete issues and problems. The journal publishes socially engaged, innovative, creative and critical scholarship with a focus on ethical and political issues in the humanities, public policy, and leadership. *Penumbra* is a peer-edited and peer-reviewed journal committed to spanning the divide between scholarly and creative production, and to fostering work from graduate students, junior scholars and emerging artists, in addition to more established critical and creative voices.

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## Yo Protesto! Puerto Rican Anti-Vietnam War and Pro-Independence Protests

The American sphere of interest, per the Monroe Doctrine (1823), arguably inducted several Latin American countries into the United States' habit of interfering with other countries when U.S. interests were at stake. Paradoxically, as Historian Michael Parenti points out: "Not many Americans could put together two intelligent sentences about the histories of Mexico, Canada, Puerto Rico, or Cuba..." (qtd. Lockhard 269). This sobering and embarrassing admission concerning the United States' general lack of global intellect toward the cultures and histories of countries in which it invests millions of dollars or, at the very least, spend millions of dollars in humanitarian aid. A broad base of historians, such as William Applebaum Williams and his "revisionist" followers, contend that "empire is as American as apple pie"; America likes to spread its influence and democratic ideals to areas of the world where this influence is, frankly, often unwanted (Williams qtd. Lockhard 244). Walter Hixson's thesis in his controversial book *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* echoes this ethos, declaring:

[N]ational identity is both culturally constructed and hegemonic. Foreign policy flows from cultural hegemony affirming "America" as a manly, racially superior, and providentially destined "beacon of liberty," a country which possesses a special right to exert power in the world. Hegemonic national identity drives a continuous militant foreign policy, including the regular resort to war. (Hixson 1-2)

The average American does not actively pursue this hegemonic, aggressive point of view, but it is ingrained into American national identity. Average Americans want what is best

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for the United States, a desire that often excludes, in some instances, considering the point of view of their opponents.

This national identity insists that political arguments regarding foreign policy decisions rarely result in solutions that negatively affect the United States' interests, which can be interpreted as a further extension of U.S. imperialism. The Vietnam War serves as one strong piece of evidence regarding Hixson's argument for the United States' cultural identity as an aggressive, "manly, racially superior" nation. The United States is often criticized for what appears to be an ignorant attitude toward the impact of its foreign policy, and the nation's behavior in Latin America remains key testimony in the argument that the supposed "beacon of liberty" acts imperialist – often. The United States' interventions in Latin America under the banner of anti-communism follow the same pattern of behavior Hixson discusses in *The Myth of American Diplomacy*. Just a forty-year slice of the country's history (1954 – 1990) reveals that the

list of Latin American governments, some of them democratic, that were actively destabilized, overthrown, or replaced directly or indirectly by the United States is long and sobering: Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1963), Dominican Republic (1965), Chile (1973), Jamaica (1980), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), Nicaragua (1990). (Lockhard 252)

Following this "long and sobering" behavioral pattern, U.S. war efforts in Vietnam, political scientist Craig Lockhard argues, were "hardly unique" (252). What was unique about the Vietnam War, however, was the historically significant amount of Americans – over half the population – who opposed it (Carroll).

This article examines the unique role Latin Americans played in the movement against the United States involvement in the Vietnam War. I explore new scholarship and personal narratives, as well as the music and art of the era, to map the intersections between the civil rights movement, anti-war effort and Puerto Rican independence agenda on the mainland and in Puerto Rico.

## **LATIN AMERICAN MINORITIES & THE VIETNAM WAR**

The larger reaches of the civil rights movement in American history remains largely glossed over in historical texts; the movement was far reaching, and included the resurgence of Native American cultural recognition, migrant politics of the Chicano movement, and the resurgence of nationalism among Americans of Puerto Rican descent. These aforementioned groups – who also contributed lives to the Vietnam War effort – became emboldened by the rhetoric of the various factions of the civil rights movement. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations responded by monitoring perceived "terrorist threats" from within these communities. Those who were targeted for surveillance included the Puerto Rican Young Lords, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the organizations

with which he had been affiliated, and the Black Panthers, to name a few.

Contemporary historians recognize that the chaotic Vietnam War era's story cannot be told without acknowledging the links between the anti-Vietnam War movement to the various factions of the civil rights movement. George Mariscal chronicles the Chicano-American experience of the Vietnam War in 1999's *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War*, interspersing literature from and about the war with historical and cultural accounts, such as veteran's war memories, of the many Mexican Americans who fought in the Vietnam War. He asserts that Latin Americans, despite their large contribution to many U.S. war efforts, are left out of the larger dialogue about the war:

Two of the surnames that appear most often on the wall of the Viet Nam [sic] Memorial in Washington D.C., are Johnson and Rodriguez. These two names tell us something about the composition of the U.S. military during the war, especially the combat units [...] histories of the war and cultural representations of the war have yet to hear the voice of "Rodriguez." (Mariscal 3)

The cultural history of the Vietnam War, through the voice of "Rodriguez," appears similar to that of some African-American accounts of their experience during the Vietnam War era. General feelings of "otherness" or "separateness" dominate journalist Wallace Terry's book *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War*, a collection of war memories from African American Vietnam veterans; similar expressions of cultural distance are expressed in Puerto Rican veteran accounts. Chicano, Puerto Rican, African American, and Native American veteran remembrance of the Vietnam War all include testimonies of the conflicting feelings they had as soldiers; it was difficult to fight for the freedom of another country when one perceived one's own freedoms as citizens of the United States were compromised, suppressed, or non-existent.

While several Puerto Rican Vietnam War veterans have been awarded high honors in the U.S. Military, including the Medal of Honor, the Navy Cross, and the Distinguished Service Cross, many veterans of Latin American descent remain passed over in favor of Caucasian soldiers. On February 21, 2014, President Barack Obama announced that he would award the Medal of Honor, retroactively, to nineteen "discrimination victims," seventeen of which are classified as "Hispanic" (Wilson). It is worth noting that, even in 2014, Jesse Erevia, the son of one Hispanic recipient, Santiago J. Erevia, remarked that his family "wondered why [Santiago] didn't receive [the award] the first time and thought it may have been because of his name" (Wilson). Tensions between the Latin American community and the United States government have unfortunately been a predictable object of consternation in U.S. history for the majority of the country's past and present.

Despite the racial strife that dominated the Vietnam War era in the United States, all "races" of the country appeared in the U.S. armed forces during the conflict, just as

they did in every previous conflict in the country's history. The hastily and purposefully timed 1917 Jones-Shafroth Act allowed the United States to draft Puerto Ricans into World War I, and Puerto Ricans have consistently served in every U.S. conflict and in its armed forces since the first world war. Like every other American "group," Puerto Rico made a large contribution to the Vietnam War. An estimated 48,000 Puerto Ricans served in the armed forces during the conflict, and hundreds of Puerto Ricans died in the Vietnam War, either killed in action or taken as prisoners of war (Avilés-Santiago, n.p.). Many Puerto Rican soldiers returned to the U.S. with anti-American sentiments and anger that would stoke the fires of Puerto Rican protests against the war in Vietnam and for independence of Puerto Rico.

### ANGER AND ACTION

A wave of visible Puerto Rican pride emerged in part because of the televised marches and Sit-Ins of the civil rights movement. Echoing sentiments George Mariscal describes in *Aztlán and Viet Nam*, Yasmin Ramírez notes:

Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, as well as African Americans, joined forces to demand civil rights reforms throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The induction of thousands of young Chicanos and Puerto Ricans into the Vietnam War added Latino voices to antiwar protests. (Ramírez 10)

The Latino artists joining in anti-war protest voiced their feelings in many ways, including art, social work, and music. Ramírez's research of graphic art pieces made by Latin American artists during the Vietnam War era reveals several links connecting the Civil Rights Movement to anti-Vietnam War protests. One distinctive anti-war poster, designed by Cuban native Tony Evora, titled "Cero Plebiscito / No Vietnam" (Zero Plebiscite/No Vietnam, 1966), combines civil rights issues on the mainland and the island with a distinct anti-Vietnam War stance. The poster, according to Ramírez,

[r]elates to events in 1966, a year when the Puerto Rican government proposed holding a plebiscite to decide the island's political status. The U.S. Congress, however, advised the organizers that they would not recognize the plebiscite as legally binding. Consequently, the pro-independence supporters lobbied the public to boycott the process. An additional cause for alarm at that time was the fact that Puerto Ricans, [denied] voting rights in U.S. presidential elections, were being sent to Vietnam in droves. Evora's screaming figure conveys outrage at the injustice of men being enlisted in battles that they had not chosen. (Ramírez 11)

The basic right to vote – especially on a ballot that related to your home's political status – serves as only one example of the many social injustices faced by both island and main-

land Puerto Ricans. The “screaming [in outrage] figure” in Evora’s work remained silent in poster form, but his figurative voice found a literal mouthpiece in the Young Lords, a group that acted, loudly and purposefully to engaged Puerto Ricans on the mainland to demand social change.

In 1969, in a predominantly Puerto-Rican neighborhood in el barrio of East Harlem, New York City, a group of young Puerto Ricans “piled garbage on Third Avenue and set it ablaze” (Lee). This bonfire was arguable the first noticeable action of the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican revolutionary organization “of mostly Puerto Rican students from SUNY-Old Westbury, Queens College and Colombia University” (Lee). These revolutionaries living in many major U.S. cities were the children of Puerto Ricans who, en masse, migrated to the U.S. between 1948 and 1958, as U.S. citizens, “in search of stable jobs and decent housing” (Lee). These citizens did not receive the same treatment of their fellow citizens; racially marginalized, Puerto Rican immigrants “faced filthy and dangerous tenement housing and a school system that denigrated their language and culture and offered little opportunity for higher education” (Lee). Dissatisfied with their situation, young Puerto Ricans on both the island and mainland began to revolt during the Vietnam War era. Even though Puerto Ricans sent their children to fight the war in Vietnam, they continued to fight a war against inequality on their own streets.

Inspired by a group called the Young Lords in Chicago, Illinois, who “were a former street organization that gained national attention when they took over a local church in order to provide child care, a breakfast program, and other community-oriented programs,” Young Lords groups across the United States began to develop similar community-based projects (Lee). The Young Lords’ original ethos was a bit more militant and revolutionary, but eventually they channeled their “attention-grabbing strategies to draw attention to social inequality”; the groups took their cues to action from the communities they lived in, though a few members pursued an agenda concerned more with Puerto Rican Independence and cultivating Puerto Rican nationalism. One of the more aggressive advocates for Puerto Rican independence was Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN)<sup>1</sup>, a separatist organization with roots in Puerto Rico. In the 1970s, FALN became known for guerrilla fighting tactics, such as bombing government areas and then publicly taking responsibility for them in order to bring awareness to the movement for Puerto Rican independence. Many FALN members were arrested in the early 1980s on charges of “seditious conspiracy” (Pérez). Protests against military action in Puerto Rico and the inequality of Puerto Ricans living on the “mainland” appear, in retrospect, extremely just causes, but the bombing of buildings makes the FALN’s actions appear far too militant and, frankly, scary, to promote real social change. The Young Lords’ communi-

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1 Armed Forces of National Liberation

ty-based projects respected all citizens and strove to help people in need, but, in contrast, the FALN's projects were more incendiary, as they followed the Black Panthers' modus operandi as a blueprint for successful social protest. While dramatic and violent action inarguably drew attention to the Puerto Rican independence movement, the lines delineating a clear difference between a "terrorist" and a "nationalist" often became blurred.

Bernard Headley discusses the paradox of nationalist fervor and terrorist activity in his article "Who is the Terrorist? The Making of a Puerto Rican Freedom Fighter." Headley's brother, Oscar López-Rivera, was imprisoned in the United States in 1981 for "seditious conspiracy" (162). While he participated in Young Lords' activities, he never joined the group, preferring to cast a wide net of civic activism that included founding cultural centers and alternative, Puerto-Rican-centric schools in the United States (Bennett). López-Rivera was alleged to have been a FALN leader and faced "two counts of exporting arms and explosives in interstate commerce" (López-Rivera and Headley 162). Evidence from López-Rivera's trial revealed the "extended and sophisticated government activity [that attempted to connect] Puerto Rican prisoners of war and their outside supporters of criminal activity" (162). Furthermore, López-Rivera alleges that this U.S. government activity encourages the "arrest and subsequent incarceration" or "ordinary citizens [who support] Puerto Rican independence" (162-3). López-Rivera admits his links to FALN, but does not claim responsibility for any deaths associated with FALN actions.

López-Rivera argues an important and ignored position of U.S. history – the position of "a freedom fighter and a prisoner of war" who believes himself to be wrongly incarcerated as a "terrorist" (López-Rivera and Headley 163). Oscar López-Rivera maintains that he was "born a colonized subject" of the U.S. and that one of his duties, as a patriot, "is to fight, by any means necessary, for the liberation of Puerto Rico, so that, as a nation, [his] people can exercise their right to self-determination and national sovereignty" (163). Reflections of this attitude can be found in much of the FALN's rhetoric, but the Young Lords did not try to achieve Puerto Rican liberation from the U.S. or national sovereignty. Instead, the Young Lords focused on community projects, mostly in a non-violent, civic-minded way. López-Rivera personifies Tony Evora's screaming figure in Cero Plebiscito; his outrage over being unjustly enlisted in the Vietnam War reshaped itself into outrage over being unjustly enlisted in propagating an idea of America that he disagreed with, and his civil work supports his alternative idea of America – one that includes and celebrates Puerto Ricans as part of America's fabric. He is a patriot in that he has unfailingly fought for freedom, but specifically the freedom of Puerto Rico.

Arguing that "self determination, democratization, and military occupation are favorite topics of U.S. politicians and the news media," López-Rivera points out that discussions of these topics are limited to Europe and Asia and do not extend toward Puerto Rico. After condemning the U.S. for criminal colonization of Puerto Rico under the laws of the United Nations, he recounts Puerto Rico's tumultuous history with the U.S., begin-

ning with U.S. history indoctrination in Puerto Rican schools, and the “destruction” of Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party under the Roosevelt and Truman administrations (166). López-Rivera paints Puerto Rico as a police-occupied state under a campaign to “stigmatize and criminalize the entire patriotic movement”; 1950s Puerto Ricans were scared to wear the colors of the Nationalist Party or show outward support for the movement (167-8). López-Rivera’s first grade classroom became a forum for anti-patriotic propaganda,” where “leaders in the patriotic struggle were called bandits, terrorists, lunatics, and criminals” by their U.S. overlords (167). The “freedom fighter” recalls his family’s forced move to the U.S. from Puerto Rico, due to “Operation Bootstrap,” a U.S. initiative that urged “emigrants [to help] stabilize the economy by sending money they earned in the United States back to their families” (168). The “dehumanizing...degrading...and demeaning” police violence López-Rivera experienced in Chicago soured him to the U.S. Despite feeling as though he were a marginalized individual, López-Rivera decided to serve in the Vietnam War in 1965, believing “firmly that [he] was there to fight a communist invasion, and that [his] mission was to help the Vietnamese forces liberate their country” (171). The heightened anti-communist rhetoric could not be escaped in the United States, and López-Rivera’s sympathies were in line with the idea of a free Vietnam.

Unsurprisingly, López-Rivera found the Vietnam War a living comparison to the nationalist struggles of the Puerto Rican independence and patriotic movements. The Vietnam War was the first “televised” war, and thus protests against it – and civil rights demonstrations – were seen. One could find a compatriot in their living room, even if it was just a blurred televised image. Many Americans who did protest – for Civil Rights, the end to the Vietnam War, women’s rights, etc. – found solace in that their views were not only shared but also vocalized, televised, and part of a national cultural dialogue. The Vietnam War revealed the horrors of combat, often in color, on the evening news. Citizens of the United States were forced to reconcile their own views against the violence on screen. For those fighting in the war, especially soldiers of marginalized cultural backgrounds, the inequalities and injustices they may have passively noticed at home became magnified during the war, and, for many, more amplified upon their return from service. López-Rivera calls his time in Vietnam a “political baptism” where he learned the fundamentals of colonization by U.S. standards (Headley and López-Rivera 171):

[I now realized] what an earlier generation of Puerto Rican patriots meant when they said that we and our African American brethren were being used as cannon fodder in the white man’s wars [...] I was trained to be a terrorist; and my role in Vietnam was to bring terror and havoc to the Vietnamese. I was there shooting and trying to kill people who had not done anything to the Puerto Rican people [...] I was sent to Vietnam to do what good colonized people do: protect the

economic, military, and political interests of the colonizer. (López-Rivera and Headley 171-2)

Though awarded the bronze star for his service in Vietnam, López-Rivera returned to the U.S. in 1967 to devote himself to organizing activism and social protest in Chicago's Puerto Rican community. This new dedication to public service stemmed from López-Rivera's belief that the "real terrorists were the Chicago police who broke bones, cracked heads, and drove fear into the hearts of citizens" (173-4). However, this Vietnam veteran's actions eventually led him to be branded a "terrorist," a label that rankles López-Rivera and convinces him that he has been wrongly imprisoned; López-Rivera believes his incarceration – and many others' – results from his Puerto Rican nationalism (173-4). The "wrongful imprisonment" of Puerto Rican "nationalists" remains one of many matters spurring new activists for Puerto Rican independence, and recent films like Iris Morales' 1996 documentary of the Young Lords, *¡Palante Siempre Palante!*, highlights the U.S.'s rejection of Puerto Rican nationalism through the lens of 21st century colonialism.

López-Rivera finds comfort in the idea that, despite his incarceration, the decorated war veteran's "body can be imprisoned but [the American authorities] cannot imprison the spirit of Puerto Rican nationalism" (López-Rivera and Headley 174). He recalls a poem composed by Ho Chi Minh, who he identifies as a "revolutionary compatriot" (174). The poem centers on the idea of "sowing a peach seed and observing it grow into a fully developed tree," which López-Rivera sees as a metaphor for his vision of an independent Puerto Rico. He ends his treatise of nationalism with the musing "each generation of Puerto Rican patriots has sown a seed to keep our ideas and ideals alive" and that he "can only hope that the newer generation of Puerto Ricans will not fail to sow another seed for the generations yet to come" (174). The testimony of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States as personified in Oscar López-Rivera, an imprisoned man, true, but also a community activist, an American citizen (or perhaps a "colonial subject"), and an American war veteran, serves as an extended metaphor of Puerto Rico as a suppressed entity. The insistence of Puerto Rican independence and assertion of its nationalism lives on in the stories and legacies of the Young Lords, a revolutionary group dedicated to helping ordinary, often marginalized people. The activities of Puerto Rican social activists like Oscar López-Rivera during the Vietnam War era are simultaneously courageous and conflicting. How is a Vietnam War veteran turned social activist now a jailed "terrorist?" When Puerto Ricans spoke out for their independence or their wish to have cleaner neighborhoods during the Vietnam War era, the U.S. government responded with FBI infiltration and police action. But the activist spirit endures, though much of that activism manifests itself within the mainstream; many former Young Lords now hold positions in government and media (Lee).

While Oscar López-Rivera fought for Puerto Rican rights in Vietnam and in the United States, the young singer/songwriter Roy Brown Ramírez used his music to fight for social justice and an independent Puerto Rico.

### ROY BROWN'S YO PROTESTO!

Puerto Rican songwriter and political activist Brown was writing material for his album *Yo Protesto!* during the tumultuous Vietnam War era. Brown, whose mother was a native of Poncé and whose father was an American naval officer, grew up in Florida. His early memories reflect on an acute awareness of American racial inequality. He remembers wondering “why blacks had to go to the back of the bus” while he lived in Florida (“Estas brasas de aquellos fuegos”). While studying at the University of Puerto Rico in the late 60s and early 70s, the inequalities and social injustices he saw and his passion for music pushed him to explore a whirlwind of social and political struggles of the 70s (“Estas brasas de aquellos fuegos”). Brown was not a member of the Young Lords on the mainland, though he has played at least twice ('66, '88) for Chicago's Fiesta Boricua, a long-standing Puerto-Rican festival rooted in civic activism popular with López-Rivera's early work and efforts of the Young Lords (Flores-Gonzalez 19). Brown was more closely aligned with an “evolution of protest music” named *nueva canción*, which

utilized popular rhythms and modern instruments (electric guitar, drums, percussion, etc.) together with traditional instruments (cuatro, Spanish guitar, güiro, tiple, etc.) to create a musical genre based on both modern and folk music that would reach homes through the radio and television and their social message of reform is heard by a majority of the public. (Vázquez)

*Nueva canción* songs, unlike much of American anti-Vietnam War music, are not loud or brash. Melodic and boasting heavy Catalan guitar influence, *nueva canción* songs reflect a conglomeration of European and Caribbean sounds. *Yo Protesto!* features melodic Spanish guitar playing instead of the folksy harmonies (CSNY, the Grateful Dead, Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, etc.) or amped rock (Country Joe and the Fish, The Animals, The Rolling Stones, Jefferson Airplane, etc.) that most anti-Vietnam War American musicians performed during the era. Brown's songs from 1969's *Yo Protesto!* “stoked the fire that burned rebellious picket lines and student demonstrations of the time” (“Estas brasas de aquellos fuegos”). The refrain of “Monón” – “Fire, fire, fire/ the world is on fire!/ Fire, fire/ Yankees want fire!” – became the adopted battle cry of Puerto Rico university protesters in the 1970s, and *Yo Protesto!* appropriately sought distribution with the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's record label, Disco Libre. The era was hard on Brown but also inspirational. In a 2006 interview, Brown said of the *Yo Protesto!* era:

The hippies, the Vietnam War, [I was] a twenty-year-old who didn't know who he was [...] The police followed and pursued me. They said that I was a terrorist

and wanted to fight the governor. My friend was in jail because he didn't want to fight Asians... My life was such a disaster and the context for songs like... "Monón," "Con Macana," "Hablando," y "Dime Niña" (Frese)

The songs on *Yo Protesto!* carry a strong theme of resistance against a complex imperial power. Brown's lyrics suggest this enemy is as destructive in Puerto Rico as it is in Vietnam. Exploring his songs' lyrics reveals a new perspective on the United States during the Vietnam War era.

The popular song "Monón" also admonishes a metaphorical United States as "a man without equal/you are a man of God/fruit of evil/[you] walk dropping bombs/ [you go] digging graves/ [your] mind is nuclear/ release bombs in Vietnam" (Brown). Much like the shadowy figures in Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" (1963), "Monón" is careless and heartless regarding the havoc he wrecks around the world. In the song, "No Me Sulfuro Mas" the narrator recalls, "back in Santo Domingo/Haiti and Vietnam/there are thousands of others [who] also suffer... [but] we who know who to stop" (Brown). The U.S. is the enemy of not only Puerto Rico, but all those who suffer under its oppressive actions. And, far from the hippie messages of peace and love, Brown's lyrics for the song "Páco Marquez" seethe with violent intention: "With a revolver in hand/the friend of my brother/ is finished... Men of an ideal/ fighters against an evil/ that has a people chained" (Brown). The overt imagery of slavery, paired with the image of a semi-concealed "revolver," implies the encouragement of Puerto Rico against its captor, the United States.

*Yo Protesto!*, for all its protesting, is still very much an album of 1969. Although the album has two different covers (one for the Vanguardia label's release and another, the first, for its release on the label Disco Libre), both show protest occurring. The Disco Libre cover includes slap-dash, graffiti-style lettering over a scene of protesters marching in a line next to gun-toting guards, echoing many of the evocative images of social protest seen in the media during the Vietnam War era. The second cover for Vanguardia shows a seated Brown holding a protest sign (depicting himself, playing the guitar) with the same lettering style of the first cover. Both images reference protest, befitting the title, but the second cover, featuring Brown, utilizes the guitar – music – as the primary mode of protest. This cover is more indicative of the gentler tone of social reform not only taken by *nueva canción* songs on the island, but also from the Young Lords on the mainland. Roy Brown's protest music, even while often boasting stirring and provocative lyrics, approached protest with a more peaceful stance than that of the FALN, and thus is more indicative of most common protest demonstrations (but not necessarily all) occurring in Puerto Rico during the Vietnam War era.

Roy Brown found political inspiration from celebrating nature (also a trait of nationalist songs). In several of his songs, he intertwines compliments to the "beautiful island" with social commentary. The U.S. military's use of the "little sister" island of Vi-

equates for bombing and artillery testing has long rankled the Puerto Rican public, and the ravaging of Puerto Rico's islands for commercial use is a recurring theme in several of the songs on *Yo Protesto!* The charming floating ballad "Dime Niña" is a love song to the people of Puerto Rico. "Tell me, friend, if you seek the gloom, loneliness," he sings. "And tell me brother, why not fight for your love, your dignity? [Why not] tell people, of the glory...father of freedom." Brown renders Puerto Rico as a homeland even for those who never called it home – that is, "home" for Puerto Ricans living in America and who are unable to reconcile their perceived dual nationalities. The lyrics of "Mr. Con Macana" lament that a fallen comrade will "die without knowing why/ and you will be nothing/ without knowing the Borinquen/ the bright jungle" (Brown). The "bright jungle" gives a Puerto Rican "something" to live for, a "why" that demands to be answered.

The Young Lords brought the issues of el barrios to the news outlets, and the FALN made sure that everyone was aware that some Puerto Ricans preferred independence from U.S. oppression. These cornerstones to Puerto Rican anti-war and social protest present a historical reality long overlooked and underrepresented in the telling of the historiography of the United States and the Vietnam War. Roy Brown's *Yo Protesto!* protests that Puerto Rico's side of the Vietnam War era story may be a small piece of a larger narrative of American history. Roy Brown continues to compose and perform his music of protest and pro-Puerto Rico, partly abiding by the work of the FALN, the Young Lords, and Oscar López-Rivera, but also enduring as his own voice, carrying his own protest signal – his guitar. Brown remains an approachable and beloved figure in Puerto Rico – many people I spoke to in San Juan were delighted to talk about him and many suggested that I call him or drop by his house. Like his pro-Puerto Rican Independence compatriots, Roy Brown remains one of the many voices of "Rodriguez," and he, like many others, has made a life-long commitment that his voice, and his protests, continues to be heard.

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